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Introduction

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In Woody Allen's film, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), the fictional philosopher Louis Levy holds the pessimistic view that events in one's life «unfold so unpredictably, so unfairly, human happiness does not seem to have been included in the design of creation»; it is only «we, with our capacity to love, that give meaning to the indifferent universe». The apparently hopeful note that «most human beings seem to have the ability to keep trying, and even to find joy from simple things like their family, their work, and from the hope that future generations might understand more» (qtd in Lee 2001, pp. 57-58) is contradicted by the fact that, at the end of the film, we know that professor Levy committed suicide, going «out the window» (see Fahy 2001, p. 87). Professor Levy's «Sartrean existentialism» (Lee 2001, p. 58) would not be endorsed by most eighteenth-century thinkers, writers and divines, at least in England (for France, see e.g. Mauzi 1969). The age of the Enlightenment believed that man's morality could be attuned to the harmony of the universe and individual happiness, when obtained through a virtuous and ethical life, was synonymous with universal happiness.

Roy Porter, who devotes a chapter to «Happiness» and puts it at the very center of his influential book on the British Enlightenment, thinks that the Enlightenment's «great historical watershed lay in the validation of pleasure» (Porter 2000, p. 258). One's personal, psychological and even bodily pleasures became, to use Alexander Pope's words, «our being's end and aim» (*Essay on Man*, Epistle IV, ll. 1-2; Mack 1950, p. 128). Pope actually did not want to define happiness: he rejected both the principal classical versions of happiness, the Stoic and the Epicurean, «Pleasure and Contentment» (l. 22; p. 129); he did not fully subscribe to the egotistical explanation of happiness, as it does not «subsit [...] in the good of one, but all» (l. 38; p. 131); he thought that happiness increased in «mutual wants», without depending on condition and circumstance, because «Heav'n breaths thro' ev'ry member of the whole / one common blessing, as one common soul» (ll. 61-62; p. 134). Pope's *caveat*, «Oh sons of earth! Attempt ye still to rise, / By mountains pil'd on mountains, to the skies? / Heav'n still with laughter the vain toil surveys, / And buries madmen in the heaps they raise» (ll. 73-76), reminded his readers that happiness is not easy to obtain and cannot

be the outcome of one's will-to-power, because «Fortune her gifts may variously dispose, / And these be happy call'd, unhappy those» (ll. 67-68; pp. 134-135). That said, though, Pope agreed with his contemporaries on some philosophical and moral grounds of happiness. In the famous discussion of self-love at the end of *An Essay on Man*, Pope equated individual passions with social reason, and, although their relationship is «hopelessly murky» (Damrosch 1987, p. 149), that association shows how Pope voiced the eighteenth-century *locus classicus* of spontaneous, natural happiness: the natural rights to pursue one's interest could increase sociability, if contained within the bounds of virtue and benevolence.

As noted above, happiness remained somewhat mysterious to Pope (Meyer Spacks 1997, p. 183), because «Fix'd to no spot is Happiness sincere, / 'Tis nowhere to be found, or ev'ry where» (ll. 15-16; Mack 1950, p. 129). William Warburton, the first posthumous editor of Pope's collected works, believed that Pope's idea of happiness coincided with that of virtue:

> *Conscious* Innocence (says the poet) is the only source of *internal* Peace; and *known* Innocence, of *external*, therefore, Peace is the sole Issue of Virtue; or, in his emphatic words, *Peace is* all *thy own*; a conclusive observation in his argument, which stands thus: Is Happiness rightly placed in Externals? No; for it consists in Health, Peace, and Competence. Health and Competence are the product of Temperance, and Peace of perfect Innocence» (Warburton 1750, p. 92).

Self-love and sociability, in fact, «are only two different motions of the appetite to Good, by which the Author of Nature hath ennabled Man to find his own happiness in the happiness of the Whole» (p. 84). The coincidence of happiness and virtue (the desire of moral good) in a 'conscious and known innocence' is providential: it is guaranteed by the «Author of Nature». Warburton proposed a teleological understanding of happiness, in which theology, naturalism, empirical psychology, and ethics coincide. Warburton's reference to providential interpretation, however, should not obscure the fact that for him, as for most eighteenth-century writers and thinkers, the ultimate ground of happiness lies in one's 'inside being', what Locke defined as the satisfaction of our desire of pleasure, fear of pain and avoidance of uneasiness. Locke united a hedonistic interpretation to theological voluntarism (and Pufendorf's *jus naturale*): real happiness is «not only what we ought to do morally, but it is also what conduces to our greatest happiness, as is evident when we think of the 'unspeakable' joys and equally terrible pains that God holds out as rewards and punishments» (Taylor 1989, p. 171).

Charles Taylor observes that Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, the philosophers of moral sentiments, and even most Deists subordinated the reference to God «to a conception of happiness which is defined in purely creaturely

terms. Happiness is the attaining of things we by nature desire, or pleasure or absence of pain» (p. 267). Afterlife's rewards and punishments are only the reflections of this life's pleasures and pains.

Thus, also happiness as pure expression of virtue became a secularized version of theological thought. Darrin McMahon underlines how the Enlightenment changed the traditional conception of the happy man «as one who approached the gods, who had gone beyond the merely human, who had achieved a form of transcendence» (McMahon 2006, pp. 12-13). The eighteenth century made happiness into something that can be obtained in this life, or in the course of history, through progress: «We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue of the human race», Edward Gibbon declared (see Nisbet 1994, p. 187). Happiness became «less an idea of godlike perfection than a self-evident truth, to be pursued and obtained in the here and now» (McMahon 2006, p. 13). Others held an even more extreme view according to which the «principle of self-interest» was not only the spring of human actions but the main and best incentive to promote and administer a society. «This atomization of the public good into disparate interests amounted to a privatization of virtue» (Porter 2000, p. 263).

Various historical changes and events contributed to the transformation of happiness from a luxury item for the very few into a larger social and political agenda: the growth of urban centres, the birth of a consumer society, the emergence of secularized individualism, the financial revolution, Locke's science of the mind, utilitarian ethics, the new political arithmetics (forerunner of modern economic science), and the rise of sentimentality and sensibility (McMahon 2006, pp. 197-252). Individualism and empiricism shaped the new configuration of happiness: in traditional societies, from the Greeks through Christianity, the norms by which man's actions are judged were inscribed within society itself and even when actual social life diverged from the norms nonetheless it was ultimately perceived as the production of those norms; instead,

> the breakup of the traditional forms of social life which was produced by the rise of individualism, begotten partly by Protestantism and capitalism, made the reality of social life so divergent from the norms implied in the traditional vocabulary that all the links between duty and happiness were gradually broken. The consequence was a redefinition of the moral terms. Happiness [was] no longer defined in terms of satisfactions which are understood in the light of the criteria governing a form of social life; it [was] defined in terms of individual psychology. Since such a psychology [did] not yet exist, it ha[d] to be invented. Hence the whole apparatus of appetites, passions, inclinations, principles, which is found in every eighteenth-century moral philosopher (MacIntyre 1998, p. 107).

The utilitarian rule of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, introduced by Richard Cumberland (White 2006, p. 129) and Francis Hutcheson (Taylor 1989, p. 264) and developed, later in the century, by Jeremy Bentham, derived from the psychologization of the ethical, theological, and socio-political spheres. Happiness became 'my' happiness, or, in Dr Johnson's terms, the «multiplicity of agreeable consciousness» (see Norton 2012, p. 6). «Happiness consists in the highest and most durable Gratifications of, either of all our *Desires*, or, if all cannot be gratified at once, of those which tend to the greatest and most durable *Pleasures*, with exemption either from all *Pains* and Objects of *Aversion*, or at least from those which are most grievous», wrote Francis Hutcheson (1742, p. 114). Those divines and thinkers, such as Joseph Butler, who took issue with Hutcheson's 'complete sentimentalism' (see Potkay 2000, p. 97) and with the moral-sentimental school for transforming ethics into aesthetics, and promoted, instead, a rational view of passions and self-love, adopted a providential explanation of the coincidence between morality and happiness. Such a coincidence is granted in the after-life, however, not in this sublunary world.

Yet even Butler's providential justification of the conjunction of duty and self-interest is based on, and clashes with, his individualism. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, «[Butler's] theology is pernicious because it enables him to bring in the eternal world to redress the balance of duty and interest in the temporal world. The individualism is apparent in his account of human nature, which is expressed in terms of the self-awareness of the single individual» (MacIntyre 1998, p. 106). In less refined thinkers such as Abraham Tucker, adds MacIntyre, God had become almost a *deus ex machina* who bridged the gap between the wordly, corporeal explanation of happiness, and other-wordly providentialism: the link between the here-and-now and future life remained more a *petitio principii* than a convincing explanation. For instance, in *The Light of Nature Pursued*, Tucker said that men naturally follow their instincts and satisfy their desire for pleasure; at the same time he maintained that «the basic moral rule is that we should all work for the good of all men, to increase the amount of satisfaction in the universe, whether it is our own or that of others» (p. 107). Therefore, if men work to increase the happiness of all men, God becomes the metaphysical guarantee that all the benevolence and happiness produced by them will be equally divided. It was almost a financial version of theology, on which MacIntyre comments: «This happiness God has divided into equal shares – equal because our original corruption makes us all equally undeserving – to be allotted one per person. I become entitled to my share by working to increase the common stock. By so working I increase that stock and thus my own share. I am, in fact, a partner in a cosmic joint stock enterprise of which God is the unremunerated managing director» (p. 107).

Separated though they were by their different conceptions of morality, in

the end both the moral-sentimentalists and the providentialists shared the same quantitative-arithmetic vocabulary (Benjamin Stillingfleet's satire of the 'mathematical methods' being the exception to the rule; see McMahon 2006, pp. 213-214). Both Tucker and Hutcheson believed in a «perfectly interlocking universe, which God had designed for the mutual good and happiness of its inhabitants» (Taylor 1989, p. 261). On the other hand, not only the followers of Descartes, Locke and Hume, but also orthodox Latitudinarians such as John Norris, or John Tillotson, admitted the desire for pleasure, including sensory pleasure, which then would lead to the desire for God, as an irresistible bias in us that must be seconded and made more explicit and clear through will and reason (Mander 2008, pp. 149-159; see also Regina Dal Santo's article in this collection). «Things work together for the best», in this optimistic conception of individual *and* cosmic happiness (Taylor 1989, p. 261).

However, the picture is not always so bright and uniformly positive. According to Vivasvan Soni, the modern devaluation of happiness as a «bourgeois complacency» (Fredric Jameson's phrase, see Soni 2010, p. 3), as private self-interest with no regard for community and without a political scope, was already contained «in the logic of the eighteenth-century's own discourses». The eighteenth-century rhetoric of a universal, providential happiness, in Soni's view, obscured the fact that it had lost the deeper understanding of happiness as was present in the classical Greek conception, in particular in Solon's cryptical proverb: «Call no man happy until he is dead». The Greek conception, in fact, stressed the fact that happiness is not «a passive emotion, but the practice of living well» (pp. 14-15): in other words, not the immediate fulfilment of desires or the acquisition of goods, but a life that is led virtuously and happily until its completion, and whose true happiness can be judged only from the vantage point of its final stages (on the classical 'making sense of one's life as a whole', see also Annas 1993, pp. 27-43). The eighteenth century forgot the classical conjunction of contingency and wholeness exactly when the discourses on happiness were at their height. Soni thinks that the decline of the Solonian idea of happiness had happened already in Aristotle's and Plato's ethical systems (which he calls «the first forgetting»; pp. 17 and 123 ff.); however, it was in the eighteenth-century paradigm of the 'trial narrative' that the modern discourse on happiness supplanted the Solonian idea of happiness, by suspending its hermeneutics of contingency and replacing it with the test of one's individual ability to overcome life's troubles. The 'trial narratives' undermined the full acknowledgement of contingency in favour of the individual test's results. Happiness was no longer a fact of one's complete life, bringing about the Delphic injunction 'know thyself', but «a specifically epistemological knowledge, abstracted from everyday existence, and only found by *subjecting oneself* to conditions of suffering and hardship» (p. 197). In this transformation of life into problem-solving

utilitarianism, happiness became a prize, a reward, even a profit that can be calculated. In Soni's interpretation, the process whereby the hermeneutics of happiness became a 'trial narrative' which suspends and negates the very hermeneutics from which it was generated, is visible in Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and in many eighteenth-century narratives, especially in the sentimental ones. Once the trial narrative intruded into the novel, it generated «the modern reified conception of happiness in time *after* the trial» and impeded the return to the classical notion, imposing «its rules on any subsequent narrative of happiness. Thus even when the trial narrative itself has ended, no return to a tragic [i.e. Solonian] narrative structure is possible» (p. 18). What was finally lost in this sentimentalized replacement of the classical idea of happiness with the 'trial narrative' is the very utopian ideal that the Enlightenment wanted to celebrate and enact in modern society: «driven out of narrative, severed from community, emptied of political content, happiness [became] an awaited reward in a never-ending time of trial» (Norton 2014, p. 359).

Soni's interpretation is complex and philosophically profound, and cannot be adequately summarized and discussed here; it brings to surface the dire implications of what McMahon calls the transition from «the happiness of virtue to the virtue of happiness» (McMahon 2004): the reification of happiness, the shrinking of the political within the spheres of the economical and the individual, the loss of totality and of any ambition to utopia. The problem of the reification and mystification of happiness was however well-known to some eighteenth-century writers: we have seen how for Pope happiness was indeed a slippery concept; Samuel Johnson made the search for happiness a theme of his work, yet he imbued it with the difficulty of not only grasping the concept but grasping felicity itself, *qua* the vanity of human wishes (on Johnson and Hume's sceptical approach to happiness see Potkay 2000, and Freibrug in this collection); Jonathan Swift's scourging satire of all forms of enthusiasm exposed the condition of complacent happiness as a form of madness: «*the Possession of being well deceived*. The Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves» (Walsh 2010, p. 112).

In his *Jonathan Swift: Defeat, Isolation, and the Price of Failed Norms* in this collection, Howard D. Weinbrot examines Swift's increasing disenchantment with the flimsiness of the norms that rule the individual and society. In his life, Swift became ever more hostile «to British culture's growingly benevolent view of mankind», observes Weinbrot; this created in him a personal unhappiness towards the violence and dogmatism of his cultural and political mileu, a «darkness of vision» that cast a gloomy shadow over his affection for his friends and his delight in domestic harmony, and made him «almost instinctively [hate and detest] 'that animal called man'». Professor Weinbrot detects the several reasons for «Swift's fear, concern with change, and fury toward those not properly responding

to his concern», in the political situation of his time, with a new royal dynasty that threatened to reduce the power of the established Church, and upstart politicians who had become powerful and rich to the detriment of a virtuous administration; in the recollection of a past made of revolutions, upheavals, regicide, dissenting sects; in «the special case of Irish Catholic subjection»; in his failed career and removal from England; in his idea of original sin and predestination; and in his own poor health. A dominant theme in Swift's works is the «sense of collapse, loss of order, of one man who stands in the gap to resist presumed moral barbarism and pays the price»: whether he denounced the disappearance of the norms or insisted on norms that are under threat, he ultimately regarded humanity as self-destructive or unable to improve. For Swift, «neither church nor state, neither humanity nor a beloved woman, neither epic precedent nor equine reason, are enduring and practical models»; and yet, Prof. Weinbrot insists, we should not confuse the dark side of Swift's message with his larger desire to draw attention not only to the problems he satirized but also to how overcome and solve them: «Excess evokes awareness, which evokes attention, which, he again hopes, might check decay. Swift thus does not often provide comfort, but does evoke a norm that requires reorientation or significant stretching of our own norms». If Swift's lost battles made him an unhappy man, his continual reference to a stability under threat, which can exist only in «shared rather than competing human interests in human relations», bequeaths us with a glimpse of political optimism and allows to think in sober utopian terms, without any concession to a sloppy complacency with the present, and with a clearer vision of the future.

Samuel Johnson perfectly understood Swift's uneasiness: Rudolf Freiburg, in his *«The Multiplicity of Agreeable Consciousness»: Samuel Johnson's Sceptical Philosophy of Terrestrial Happiness*, expands on James Boswell's portrait of Dr Johnson as a complex and unhappy character, troubled by various diseases and unbearable bouts of «morbid melancholy» that made him wish to «escape from himself». However, Johnson was also a good-humoured man, who liked to entertain his friends, spend the nights in pub-crawls, and drive through London, a city he associated with life and felicity because it provided a «multiplicity of agreeable consciousness». Freiburg discusses the special nature of Johnson's eudaemonism, finding its characteristics in the intersection of various doctrines, from Callicles to Plato, from Aristotle to the Stoics, the Scholastic tradition, and contemporary empiricism. In particular, Johnson believed, as Richard Hooker had done, that «Happiness is that estate whereby we attain, so far as possibly may be attained, the full possession of that which simply for itself is to be desired, and containeth in it after an eminent sort the contentation of our desires, the highest degree of all our perfection» (Lynch 2002, p. 232). Johnson's happiness is an end of human life and is meaningful in itself: it must be «imagined as a welcome byproduct of human activities»

that can be obtained through a virtuous life. In the end, Johnson's sceptical approach made him reject a simplistic interpretation of the nature of happiness: he adhered to the 'know thyself' dictum, and put the several expressions of human, worldly happiness to the test of reason, by destroying the 'cobwebs of the mind' that submerge consciousness in the illusion of an ephemeral and vain felicity. Johnson deconstructed several clichés of worldly happiness, eventually to endorse only the felicity «beyond the grave», the eternal happiness of after-life.

Regina Dal Santo, in her *John Tillotson, Self-love and the Teleology of Happiness*, explores the ways in which not only sensualists, moral-sentiment philosophers, or enlightened eudaemonists, but also divines and sermonists adhered to the 'happiness revolution' that took place in the long eighteenth century. The Latitudinarians promoted a moral reformation that validated human feelings, desires and ambitions on earth, when controlled by reason and leading to a virtuous and charitable behaviour. In particular John Tillotson's ample reference to the egocentric passions of self-love and self-interest «show[s] a turning point in the evolution of the modern concept of happiness: while asserting the individual right to happiness, Tillotson reminds his audience of the possibility of a moderate but delightful enjoyment of the world that ultimately correspond to the natural fulfilment of self-interest. Tillotson changes the question 'How can I be saved?' into 'How can I be saved and happy?'». Righteous improvement in this life thus becomes tantamount to redemption in the after-life, in Tillotson's view, and the consideration of future happiness could leave room to a restrained enjoyment of earthly pleasures. Dal Santo underlines the pedagogic side of Tillotson's homiletics, his addressing «the malleable nature of Man, the part that can be educated to religion and to the promotion of sincerity and charitable activities». The search for happiness, joined with obedience to God's laws and sincerity of heart, favours the improvement of society's mores and helps man to obtain his eternal happiness in the after-life. However, Tillotson never recommended an unmindful bliss in the pleasures of earthly matters or political grandeur; on the contrary, Dal Santo remarks, «Tillotson [drew] an interesting parallel between loving oneself and denying one's material desires and [concluded] that they coincide». The traditional principle of 'knowing oneself' then was central in Tillotson's prudential and providential teleology.

Brian Michael Norton's *«The Spectator», Aesthetic Experience and the Modern Idea of Happiness* finds the sources of modern aesthetics in eighteenth-century discussions on *eudaimonia* as «a first-person, typically present-tense feeling or affect», and in perceptual metaphors borrowed from the language of taste: «We have grown so accustomed to thinking about happiness in this way that we may no longer recognize it as metaphorical, and indeed it may no longer be metaphorical. In moments of happiness, we really do feel happy; there are times when we really do seem

to savor life. Aesthetic-perceptual tropes lurk even in historical accounts of how this idea came into being». By focusing on Addison and Steele's *Spectator* papers, Norton provides an archeological reconstruction of the cultural background of modern aesthetics as (also) the principles of human happiness. Addison and Steele promoted not only an artistic theory but also an art of living «that pursues affective well-being through intensifying and enlivening our experiences of the world». By becoming more perceptive to the beauties of the world and of life, «we can intensify the feeling of living, enhancing the 'Satisfactions of [our] Being'», and creating the condition for us to fully appreciate our position in a cosmic order, because aesthetic pleasure is the same pleasure animating the larger world of nature. Through «an affective affirmation of being», Addisonian aesthetic pleasure and happiness confirmed a universal, holistic experience of the world.

Kevin L. Cope's *Happy Face or Happy Space? Expansions of Happiness in Eighteenth-century Expository Verse* explores the similarly widening scope of the aesthetic (in this case poetic) experience of happiness not only as something that happens within the individual, as something 'inside', but also as something happening 'in space'. In a discussion of eighteenth-century poets ranging from Mark Akenside to James Thomson, Thomas Warton, and Christopher Smart, Cope explores the association between happiness and space, finding out several contradictions in the idea of happiness contained in eighteenth-century poetry, between mimesis and praxis: for instance, in Thomson, «happiness is procedurally paradoxical. On one hand, it is experienced primarily in the long view, from a position so detached that very little is happening; on the other hand, that long view must not only be of something but must also show that particular occasion of happiness interacting with Thomson's panoramic presentation of the seasons». The paradox consists in the fact that happiness mixes activity and inactivity, observation and engagement, and is a property in itself and a consequence of experience, as happens with the preposition 'of' that is so typical of much poetry of the time (e.g. Akenside's *Pleasures 'of ' the Imagination*): «a slightly bewildering preposition, for it suggests connecting both a bond and a diverging proceeding». Happiness's space, in the eighteenth-century verse, is a space both lost and regained, and is vast.

In her article, *«Nothing Better than Mirth and Hilarity»: Happiness, Unhappiness, Jest and Sociability in the Eighteenth Century*, Abigail Williams perceptively shifts the focus of scholarly attention from philosophy and the poetic evocations of the *beatus vir* to the «culture of mirth, of jestbooks and pamphlets designed to create well-being in alternative ways, and in particular, to drive away melancholy through communal joviality». Hers is an entirely new chapter in the study of the formation of public opinion, understood not only and not so much as the political *agora* of the newspapers, parties and clubs, but as the shared practice of sociable mirth,

a literature of laughter that moved across class and gender boundaries, «situated between oral and printed culture, constantly evoking the social exchanges that it mimics, and in turn, as jokes and jests and comic poems are copied into commonplace books and letters, [moving] back into oral circulation». The many publications designed to 'purge melancholy' were evidence of the eighteenth-century effort to increase sociability, good humour and an amiable form of communality. However, Williams observes how the idea of becoming happy through laughter was far from being a simple one: creating a shared ground for mirth was a complicated task, as jestbooks and comic poems created a tension between the well-being induced by laughter and a sense of alienation in those who were laughed at; therefore the search for sociability in merry laughter had to negotiate between 'laughing with' and 'laughing at' the social subjects. Moreover, the traditional topos of the idealized contentment of the 'happy man' was complicated and upset by jovial sociability: looking «at how people read and used the literature of jest reveals the faultlines between theories of happiness, and the lived reality. We can see the way in which jokes and games were sometimes seen as an embodiment of friendship groups, and were thus especially valuable for those living in relative isolation – often the same kind of rural seclusion that was elsewhere praised as a model of contented moderation. It also shows us the way sociable humour promoted inclusive ideas of general human well being, but that it was also frequently predicated on the exclusion of certain groups». Even in jestbooks the questions of happiness created more paradoxes than clear-cut social answers.

Isabelle Bour, in her *Happiness and Ideological Reconfiguration in the Revolutionary Novels of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays (1788-1799)*, studies the issue of happiness in the end-of-century, revolutionary interpretation given in Mary Wollstonecraft's and Mary Hays's novels, where happiness is «defined dialectically in relation to such key concepts and values as nature, reason, virtue, the passions and sensibility». Both writers derived their ideas of happiness from their reading of fiction, «where the dominant aesthetics and ethics had been for several decades those of sensibility, the corresponding generic model being the romance». Wollstonecraft and Hays set out to challenge the sentimental model rather than endorse it, because it was based on the assumption that women are intellectually inferior to men and dominated by the passions, therefore they did not give much room to happiness in their novels, where the word 'unhappy' occurs more often than 'happy' in connection with their protagonists. On the other hand, their redefinition of both sensibility and reason, with regard to women, problematized the idea of virtue and made the very structure of the sentimental novel explode into a dystopian and formally dysfunctional kind of romance that exposed «the many ways in which women are exploited by men» and voiced «the misery of the protagonists in the hyperbolic style that may be associated with revenge tragedy or Gothic fiction». In

Wollstonecraft and Hays, happiness became «gendered, psychologized and historicized [...] and found to be graspable only through redefinition of other values and through a depiction of unhappiness». These two writers may be the first example of the nineteenth century's dislike of happiness; however their criticism and dissection of sentimental romance and sentimentality positions them among those enlightened thinkers who wanted to reconsider men's and women's social and cultural status without recourse to sentimental rhetorics (on sentimentalism and happiness see Soni 2010, p. 290 ff.).

All together the articles contained in this issue complicate and – we hope – make more interesting the questions concerning eighteenth-century happiness, its role in modern literature, and its meaning for us; in the hope, to quote again Woody Allen's fictional philosopher, «that future generations might understand more».

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Jonathan Swift: Defeat, Isolation, and the Price of Failed Norms

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Abstract Starting with Jonathan Swift's famous letter on the 'falsity' of the notion of man as 'animal rationale', this article investigates the role of norms and the normative in his works. The essay especially considers *A Tale of a Tub, Gulliver's Travels*, the mock Marlborough-eulogy, the final 'Stella' poem, and the *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*. The several matters considered include Swift's major concerns and sources of his own infelicity, such as his recollection of regicide and usurping Dissent; the threat on the established Church by a later new dynasty; his removal from England and modest political career; his fear of Irish Presbyterians and the love-hate relationship with Ireland; his poor health and long periods of physical and psychological discomfort; and the role of the concept of original sin had in his works. It then deals with Swift's sense of collapse and loss of order before the presumed moral barbarism of his age, and his desire to resist the gloomy negative forces of history, for all of which Swift pays a high price. Finally, the article sees Swift's greatness in his desire to continue to fight despite his unhappiness with the world; in his portrayal of the consequences of ignoring the very norms which he unpheld; and in his refusal to stop labeling corruption, wherever it might be.

On 29 September 1725 Jonathan Swift wrote to Alexander Pope: «the chief end […] in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it». He would do so yet further if he could avoid harming himself. Now that Pope has given up translation, «when you think of the World give it one lash the more at my Request». He insists that he has «ever hated all Nations professions and Communityes and all my love is towards individualls». He hates lawyers as a group, but he loves "Councellor such a one, [and] Judge such a one […] but principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I hartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth». That is Swift's long practiced intellectual system which he shall continue «till I have done with them». Now,

> I have got Materials Towards a Treatis proving the falsity of that Definition animal rationale, and to show it would be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of Misanthropy (though not in Timons manner) the whole building of my Travells is erected: And I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my Opinion: by Consequence you are to

> embrace it immediately and procure that all who deserve my Esteem may do so too. The matter is so clear that it will admit little dispute (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 2, pp. 606-607).[1]

This famous letter tells us much about Jonathan Swift and his satire. The several disturbing words include *vex, hurting, lash, hated, hate, hate, detest, done with them, misanthropy,* and *never have peace of mind*. The terms are embedded within a larger framework that includes *divert, pleased, better,* and *love.* He sends the letter to his friend Alexander Pope with whom he bonds and thus supports Patrick Delany's remark that Swift was «a steady, persevering, inflexible friend» (Delany 1754, p. 291).[2] His misanthropy includes hatred of mankind, but love to individuals. Swift is hostile to British culture's growingly benevolent view of mankind. We are not the rational animals that scholasticism taught; instead, we are only capable of reason and often are irrational. The section includes two impossible and only half-joking elements: «all honest men» should agree with him, and Pope should «procure that all who deserve my esteem» share that opinion as well. Pope surely enjoyed Swift's playful tone, but many «honest men» and many who deserved his esteem might, and did, disagree that we are as contemptible as he paints us. Moreover, given the «great foundation» on which few others build, Swift «never will have peace of mind». In short, he expects to fail and contents himself with vexing rather than reforming. Violence, dogmatism, darkness of vision, and personal unhappiness outnumber individual friendship in the letter and characterize Swift here and elsewhere. I can only suggest how such a mode of proceeding affected a central concern in satire: assuming that those attacked deserve such attack, how do we know what is the right thing to do and how do we do it?

The connections that Delany stresses in Swift's life are paramount in one such group. He wrote several friendly, chatty, *Market Hill* poems during his amiable, long, three visits to Sir Arthur and Lady Acheson's country estate in Armagh between 1728 and 1730. These show Swift the man and poet as part of a supportive community that admires him and associates him with that old titled family. Sir Arthur was the fifth Baronet, High Sheriff of Armagh, and represented Mullingar in the Irish House of Commons from 1727 until his death in 1748. Frequent Market Hill poetic exchanges include shared and friendly criticism; the hosts are flattered by having their voices

1 The letter also refers to the «rascaly World» and alludes in a friendly way to Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and former Prime Minister under Queen Anne. For further discussion of the Swift-Pope exchanges and relationships, see Harth 1998, and Griffin 2010.

2 Samuel Johnson reprints these remarks and other favorable ones in his *Life of Swift*. See Mittendorf 2010, pp. 1022, henceforth referred to parenthetically in the text as YE 22. For fuller discussion of Swift and Johnson, see Weinbrot 2014.

ventriloquized; and specific events are memorialized in conversational poetry that circulated in manuscript. The pleasant light verse generally avoids provocative subjects in its enclosed, domestic world of congenial author and reader: «My Lady […] shews every Creature the Libels I have writ against her», Swift tells the Reverend Thomas Sheridan (18 September 1728; Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 3, p. 194). Swift is pleased regarding the affectionate teasing of a host who has requested affectionate teasing. His later part-Market-Hill *Epistle to a Lady* (1732) characterizes Lady Acheson in varied, successful, and warmly positive ways. She leads «a blameless Life», is «an humble, prudent Wife» who masters «all domestic Ends». She manages her children «by a Nod /[…] without a Rod» (ll. 98-110; see Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 633).[3] She is so obliging that her sevants love and obey her, and she is exquisitely gracious to her guests. In terms of Swift's major achievement and predisposition, however, the Market Hill poems are exceptions that prove the rule. Swift cannot stop with his portrait of an ideal domestic woman. About half way through the poem he reverts to politics, attacks the Walpole administration he would like to hang, and nearly gets himself arrested. Swift enjoys domestic harmony, but he almost instinctively moves to hating and detesting «that animal called man».

1 Turning out the Light

There are several reasons for Swift's fear, concern with change, and fury toward those not properly responding to such concern: recollection of regicide and usurping Dissent; a later new dynasty that threatened to diminish the established church; Swift's removal from England and modest political power; a mistrust of such power other than his own; the special case of Irish Catholic subjection; fear of Scotts-Irish Presbyterians and the love-hate relationship Swift had with Ireland; his poor health and long periods of physical and psychological discomfort; the concept of original sin; and of course genetic inheritance that could be a kind of predestination by DNA. Whether separate or together, these suggest a mind more amenable to opposition and objection than to compromise and persuasion. Some of this anger and loss is part of the larger Tory sense of high virtue and low success. Some of it is indigenous to Swift, and much of it is inherent in the concept of cultural fragility cognate with original sin. Nation, church, and state are protected by hardly more than an egg shell under constant attack. One error can be fatal.

3 Significantly, the first part of this poem was written at Market Hill not later than 1730; Swift's turn to hostile political satire probably is in 1732, after Market Hill. Peter J. Schakel discusses the *Market Hill* poems (Shackel 2001) in a volume including also Michael Conlon's essay, which suggests some of Swift's darker and undermining moments (Conlon 2001, pp. 133-146).

Swift may have thought that God required resistance to perceived evil. Mankind's faults are played out in what Swift regarded as malign political machinations. He makes these clear in the *Examiner*, No. 14 (1710), in which he vastly overstates the deeds of a presumably murderous and genocidal opponent: «this Island of ours, for the greatest Part of twenty Years [has] lain under the Influence of such Counsels and Persons, whose Principle and Interest it was to corrupt our Manners, blind our Understandings, drain our Wealth, and in Time destroy our Constitution both in Church and State» (Davis 1966, vol. 3, p. 12). Unlike so many British Protestants who praised the 1688 «Godly Revolution», Swift regarded the Stuart expulsion and William's arrival as perhaps desirable but certainly dangerous political events. In the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* (1708-1711) he referred to the Stuarts, but more specifically to James II, as «the abdicated Family». William III's Act of Toleration nonetheless weakened the established church and by extension the monarchy. It now was too late for «so mild a Government» and «so pure a Religion» to bring down the wrath of secular power, but he still hopes for «some strict and effectual Laws, to prevent the rising and spreading of new Sects [...] else there must never be an End» – other than religious and national decline (Davis 1966, vol. 2, pp. 3 and 5).[4] As we shall see, Swift's *Verses* on his own death (1731; 1739) exemplify a world in which Stuart collapse leads to national collapse – or so Swift feared.

Swift was more moderate than altitudinarian Charles Leslie, but he shared Leslie's premise: to stop such collapse a good man must bravely stand in the gap to protect the endangered nation. Leslie knows that those in the gap «hinder the Builders of *Babel* from Performing *All that they have Imagin'd to do*, both as to *Church* and *State*» (Leslie 1704, p. 75).[5] Leslie conflates two grim Old Testament observations. In *Genesis* (11: 1-9), God

4 The first two pages of this tract urge Swift's version of moderation, but contrast sharply with consequent tone and with the later *Examiner* quoted above.

5 The commonplace term was cognate with the concept that one compromise leads to others and to destruction of order. Swift uses the image of 'Babel' in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, l. 384, in which the new government of George I becomes «a *Babel*». He is referring to what he believes «a dangerous Faction», but also, I suspect, to the monarch's German and often French language and German advisors at court. On George I's linguistic skills, see Hatton 1978 (pp. 128-131), who adds that after the first year or so of George's reign, his royal court «had few Germans; but the very fact that there were any at all offended English susceptibilities and created mutual distrust in moments of crisis» (p. 132). Francis Atterbury often cites the foreign nature of the new monarch, as in his fear that George I might not be «resolved to reign like an *English* King, and not like a *Foreigner*». He hopes that limits upon the king's patronage of «all Forreigners [sic] from any Employments, or Grants of Lands, *&c. in these Nations* [...] may satisfy the People, that his Majesty's Affections are not settled upon Aliens and Strangers», but the Whigs oppose this for self-interested reasons (Atterbury 1714, p. 21; the pamphlet is unsigned). They wish «to bring over *Five or Six Thousand* Sluggish Famish'd *Palatines* to devour the Bread of the Natives» (p. 24).

punishes and disperses the once linguistically, politically, and morally pure people who build Babel. In prophetic *Ezekiel* (22: 3) « the angry God sees nothing but vice within Israel and «sought for a man among them, that should make up a hedge, and stand in the gap before the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none». Swift uses the familiar image ironically in *An Argument against abolishing Christianity* (1708; 1711). There Christianity itself lends «its Name, to stand in the Gap, and to employ or divert» the aberrations of dissenting ministers or else they would use their energies against the law and «the publick Peace» (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 35). More gravely, there could not be such a good man if the land was drowned in sin. Roger L'Estrange's *A Short Answer To A Whole Litter of Libellers* (1680) insists that the government must not permit Presbyterianism. He stresses fragility, consequent danger, and death. Religious comprehension would be «like a *Sea-breach* to your *Grounds*: / Suffer but *One Flaw*, the *whole Country Drowns*» (L'Estrange 1680, p. 3). Swift agreed with that concept and put it this way in 1726: under Elizabeth the «wicked Puritans» began «to quarrel only with surplices and other habits, with the ring in matrimony, the cross in baptism, and the like; thence they went on to further matters of higher importance, and, at last, they must needs have the whole government of the church dissolved» (Davis and Landa 1963, pp. 225-226).[6] One granted illicit demand leads to dissolution of the established church.

Swift exemplifies a particular kind of disaster by amplifying the horrors of warfare. He is at his often punitive best when attacking an individual(s) or an institution(s) he thinks wrong, unfairly triumphant, deviating from its proper role, or in dangerous decline from a better state. For example, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough was the great Whig icon who expanded British power to the Continent, smote the Great Satan Louis XIV, surpassed Caesar in military success and, in spite of himself, made possible the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Such praise was rendered the more potent since Marlborough was regarded as Queen Anne's virtuous martial arm against France and for British continental power. As George Smith put it, Anne and her general waged restorative campaigns in which «our QUEEN appears like the Rising Sun upon the Earth, not to burn up and to destroy, but refresh and cherish it». English «Arms were never so Successful, because our Cause was never Better» (Smith 1705, sig. A3v). Swift's Tory campaign against Marlborough helped to force him out of command in 1711 and out of the country in 1712. He returned to favor under George I, in 1722 was buried in Henry VII's chapel in Westminster Abbey, and was removed to Blenheim in 1744 at his widow Sarah's instructions. Giles Jacob's *Britain's Hero* (1722) typifies the patriotic poems on his death. Marlborough is im-

6 Swift ironically gives the narrator the role of standing in the gap on behalf of nominal Christianity. He will fight to preserve it even if the Attorney General gives «an Order [...] for my immediate prosecution» (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 27).

mortal, glorious, god-like and «Whole Armies at his Feet expiringly». His troops dispense «Deaths by Thousands as they go». There are «Millions slaughter'd as their Victims ly»; the «Cries of Victors and of Vanquish'd blend» and Marlborough evokes peace and sanguine allied conquest (Jacob 1722, pp. 6-7).

Swift would have none of this for a war he thought unnecessarily prolonged at the cost of a huge butcher's bill. His *Satirical Elegy* on Marlborough's death was written in 1722, but appeared in 1764 and 1765. It savages Marlborough, monarchs, dukes, warriors, pride, and political exploiters. The poem's incandescent conclusion pictures the duke as a glossy superficial bubble forced to the ground. God created Adam from dirt to join with Eve and create the human race. In contrast, Swift's Marlborough stained European dirt with the deaths of thousands in the War of the Spanish Succession he extended for personal gain:

> Come hither, all ye empty things,
> Ye bubbles rais'd by breath of Kings;
> Who float upon the tide of state,
> Come hither, and behold your fate.
> Let pride be taught by this rebuke,
> How very mean a thing's a Duke;
> From all his ill-got honours flung,
> Turn'd to that dirt from whence he sprung
> (ll. 25-32) (Williams 1958, vol. 1, pp. 296-297).

Swift berates Marlborough, military glory, expansionist victories, and celebration of what Jacob called «Death, in all Shapes» extending its «mighty Pow'r» (Jacob 1722, p. 7). The poem nonetheless hardly dented pride, warfare, or political ambition. Instead, Marlborough's victories made Britain a major player in continental Europe, at first enhanced Whig power, and contributed to the Hanoverian monarchs' consequent stability. Swift emphasizes the bloodletting of the warfare he detests, but he writes loser's history. The views he supported, like fewer disruptive allies, a shorter war, earlier peace, and a blue water policy, either were not practical or did not work.[7] The *Satirical Elegy* is a near paradigm of some Swiftian satire: it

7 Swift discusses these and other aspects of the War of the Spanish Succession in his *Conduct of the Allies, and of the Late Ministry, in Beginning and Carrying on the Present War* (1711, with four editions in that year). As with much of Swift's political polemic, it evoked harsh replies. John Oldmixon thus begins his *Remarks on a False, Scandalous, and Seditious Libel*: «'Tis High Time for every good *Englishman* to look about him, when our *Constitution* is so openly attacked; when our *Alliances* are treated as Villainous and Destructive, and all that we have been doing ever since the *Revolution* is represented as the Works of *Faction* and Darkness» (Oldmixon 1711, sig. A1v, with the title page as A1r; italics and Roman type reversed). For a helpful introduction and annotation of Swift's text see Goldgar, Gadd 2008.

is stunningly ordered rage against the malign success that Swift abhors, cannot correct, but can verbally punish.

Gulliver's Travels (1726, 1735) berates the nature of contemporary warfare as well as the goodness of man. The King of Brobdingnag begins to explain why Gulliver later is banished from Houyhnhnmland: his human vices make him unfit for rational equine company. The king characterizes most British natives, but his words apply to all nations. We are «the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth» (Womersley 2012, p. 189). On this scenario, Nature rather than a loving benevolent God judges us. We no longer are privileged human creatures made in God's image but, in Samuel Johnson's definition, merely permitted to live as vermin, as «Any noxious animal. Used commonly for small creatures». Johnson's third illustration for our lowered state comes from Swift: «He that has so little wit / To nourish *vermine*, may be bit» (Johnson 1755).[8] The King of Brobdingnag has the proper wit and the proper refusal to be bit. We are suffered rather than chosen. That sufferance can be retracted if the vermin become too unpleasant – as the king threatens when Gulliver, proud of 'Modern' improvements, informs him of gunpowder's splendidly destructive virtues: «he commanded me, as I valued my Life, never to mention [gunpowder] any more» (Womersley 2012, p. 193). Celebration of violence invites violence toward Gulliver himself, who may be squashed like the nasty little bug that the King of Brobdingnag thinks him.

This discussion suggests one way to approach Swift as a satirist, cultural commentator, and autobiographer – namely, to ask what workable norms he offers. We cannot be little people or big people. We should not be almost all of the characters in *Gulliver's* third book or be rational horses in the fourth book. As we shall see, even when Swift's norms are clear, he sometimes undercuts while affirming them and is angry that his affirmation does not succeed.

2 Swift, Different, and Bereft

One of Swift's set of norms is in the italicized passage in *A Modest Proposal* (1729). If followed, that sensible wisdom could avoid infant cannibalism; but the essay concludes with antagonism, defeat, and anger. No man may speak to him of prudent ways to increase Irish prosperity «till he hath, at least, a Glimpse of Hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere Attempt to put *them in Practice*» (Davis 1964, p. 117). The norm in *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* also is clear, the opposite of the narrator's own preference for toothless nominal Christianity; but it

8 All subsequent definitions and illustrative quotations are from this edition.

is a threatened norm that appears only by ironic inversion. We again see Swift's concern with cultural fragility: freethinkers believe that Christianity «is a Sort of Edifice, wherein all the Parts have such a mutual Dependance on each other, that if you happen to pull out one single Nail, the whole Fabrick must fall to the Ground». Christianity must not be abolished and must be made coherent and strong in a firmly based building. The best that ironic Swift behind the speaker can offer is the hope that if Christianity is abolished, it should only be so after the present war ends; otherwise it must trouble «our Allies; who, as it falls out, are all Christians» and proud of it (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 38).[9]

We again see Swift's fear of a variously incoherent and destructive culture in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704). That is a brilliant but – we often forget – sad story of a small family that represents a large world. A loving father on his deathbed bequeaths a mystical suit to each of his three sons, whom he regards as of equal age and worth. The neat and simple suit will grow as they grow, provide them with all the wisdom they need, and should not be altered. After the father dies, the sons promptly ignore his legacy, become fashionable and corrupt, and disorder the coat – a surrogate for the Bible – with garish ornaments. They become individuals whose names denote their Christian sects: Peter (Rome), Jack (Dissent), and Martin (Church of England). Peter further violates his father's commands by subjecting his brothers to his self-proclaimed superiority reinforced by secular power («Section IV»). Swift's history of the church in the world is a history of children rejecting their father's legacy, of brutal sibling rivalry, and of the danger to moderates in a growingly insane religious milieu. Jack and Martin realize that Peter has forced unpaternal ornamentation upon them. Jack tears it out, rips the father's suit, and rips himself and his church from God's true meaning. Martin removes some of the junk, but wisely leaves those parts that cannot be purged without damaging the suit's fabric. The Church of Rome as usurper, the Dissenting church as destructive heretic, the Church of England as a sensible but threatened *via media*, become Swift's history of the Christian church through time.

A Tale thus is contemporaneous. As a madman himself, the *Tale*'s 'Modern' narrator is keen on the lunacy and affiliations of his two religious colleagues. Since he wants to conclude his story he merely summarizes «how *Peter* got a *Protection* out of the *King's-Bench*; And of a Reconcilement between *Jack* and Him, upon a Design they had in a certain *rainy Night*, to trepan Brother *Martin* into a *Spunging-house*, and there strip him to the Skin. How *Martin*, with much ado, shew'd them both a fair pair of Heels» (Walsh 2010, pp. 132-133). Martin is on the run as one alien, and one vio-

9 Feingold 1983 characterizes some of Swift's affirmations: much of Swift's praise is for political men and women of whom he approved; some other is for aspects of art; others are by ironic inversion.

lent Christian brother joins forces and seeks to trepan him. Swift did not mean but may have hinted at the surgical meaning of the phrase 'to perforate with the trepan', as Johnson defines the cork-screw-like implement designed to bore into the skull, relieve pressure and perhaps clean out a wound's debris. It was a painful and dangerous operation from which few survived. The word's dominant meaning is Johnson's second definition: «To catch; to ensnare», which he illustrates from the second canto of Samuel Butler's third part of *Hudibras* (1678).[10] There a republican verifies the royalists' nightmare scenario: Presbyterians and Independents are waiting in the wings, sharpening their axes and plotting a return to power. They will have an easier job than before in a new martial venture whose first effort began with nothing. They then «Rais'd Funds as strange, to carry't on; / Trepann'd the State, and fac'd it down» with their own «Plots and Projects» (Butler 1709, p. 95). The lines implicitly gloss *A Tale*'s epitome of religious combat in mid-to-late seventeenth-century England: the church and state are trepanned, faced-down, subject to plots and false republican utopian projects and apparent papist absolutism and superstition. Martin needs to escape by his heels because a compromised state does not protect its established church.

This sense of collapse, loss of order, of one man who stands in the gap to resist presumed moral barbarism and pays the price, is a dominant theme in Swift's work and a defining element of his life. Part of that courageous response also concerned belief – not only in Providence, but in the positive aspects of society that Providence supplied. What, then, did Jonathan Swift believe in as workable positive norms toward which his readers might aspire?

In the *Life of Swift* Johnson observed that, upon reflection, the part of *Gulliver's Travels* «which gave the most disgust must be the history of the Houyhnhms» (Mittendorf 2010, p. 979). Johnson there suggests a problem in our attempts to understand much of Swift's major works. He is reasonably clear about what and whom he is against and how he would clear up their mess. The *Epistle to a Lady* shows that Swift's nominal mirth against corrupt politicians, here Sir Robert Walpole and his minions, masks rage: «it must be understood, / I would hang them if I cou'd». He also would «apply ALECTO's Whip, / Till they wriggle, howl, and skip» (ll. 169-70, Williams 1958, pp. 179-180). Swift feared that his desired victims might retaliate. On 26 November 1725, he inverts both the voice of the Old Testament God who has withdrawn the deluge (*Genesis* 8: 21), and the *Book of Common*

10 Johnson's illustrative quotation of 'Trepan' is taken from Dr John Arbuthnot. Johnson also quotes Robert South: «Those are but *trepanned* who are called to govern, being invested with authority, but bereaved of power, which is nothing else but to mock and betray them into a splendid and magisterial way of being ridiculous». On this scenario, the Church of England appears to have authority, but lacks the power more fully to act upon that authority.

Prayer, which asks for His mercy to a repentant people. Swift writes to Alexander Pope: «Drown the world! I am not content with despising it, but I would anger it if I could with safety». He wishes that there were some place «built for its despisers, where one might act with safety» (Walsh 2010, p. 6*;* italics and Roman type reversed).[11] Swift often is less overt about what he is for and how one can implement his ideas. Such perceived uncertainty troubled Swift, who could not understand why readers of *A Tale of a Tub* failed to see that he there «*Celebrates the Church of* England *as the most perfect of all others in Discipline and Doctrine*» (Walsh 2010, p. 6). Swift is brilliantly comic in *A Tale of a Tub*'s mockery of Transubstantiation as real presence (Section IV); but he does not make the case for the Anglican Eucharist as memorial service. Many readers think that the norms in *Gulliver's Travels* are the rational horses. Many others think they are neither norms nor even humanly possible.

At other times, Swift insists on a disappeared, disappearing, or tenuous norm. Perhaps there once was something good in the world, but it did not last, probably cannot be reclaimed, and at best is a distant gleam darkened by the night, as in the evocation of now unachievable classical virtue recalled in Glubdubdrib. Occasionally portrayal of that loss can be both beautiful and mournful, as in Swift's final poem to Stella on 13 March 1727. It is both a birth day and death day celebration and begins to answer a difficult question: what happens when a man loses his only norm or source of comfort when, in Johnson's words, he no longer has some one with whom to pass «his hours of relaxation» and with whom he can open «his bosom» (Mittendorf 2010, p. 979).

The moving final poem to Stella also asks us to consider the vexed problem of Swift's relationship with women. Lord Orrery commented that Swift thought of women «rather as Busts, than as whole figures». He thus «has seldom descended lower than the centre of their hearts» (Fróes 2000, p. 165). On 20 April 1704, Swift wrote to the Reverend William Tisdall who hoped to marry Stella: «I have no-where met with a humour, a wit, or conversation so agreeable, a better portion of good sense, or a truer judgment of men and things» (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 1, p. 154). That potential match collapsed, and thereafter Swift wrote birthday poems to Stella every year from 1719 to 1727; she tended him when he was ill, spoke with him regularly but always with others present, and was a chief source of Swift's

11 For 'Drown', see relevant, and often repeated, annotation like this: after the ark rests on dry land «Noah builds an altar, and sacrifices, 20. God accepts it and promises not to drown the world again, 21. But to continue the seasons of the year, 22» (Poole 1700, sig. C3v, in italics, numbers excepted); or, this one for fair weather: «O Almighty Lord God, who for the sin of man didst once drown all the world» (*Book of Common Prayer And Administration of the Sacraments* 1713, sig. B4v, «Prayers and Thanksgiving upon Several Occasions»). See also Swift's phrase, «please provide productive weather to a reformed people» (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 2, p. 623, 26 November, 1725). So far as I can tell, the allusion remains unacknowledged.

emotional relief. His final poem to her seeks to keep her alive in him and to deny the reality of the ailments that would kill her on 28 January 1728. The poem's first paragraph describes what Swift hopes will be shared deception. «This Day [...] This Day» must be joyful; the two forget the «mortifying Stuff» of Swift's age and Stella's illness that «not the gravest of Divines» refuses to hear (ll. 1-13). Those terminal-like words are merely two of the many that often harshly punctuate the poem: *decays, few remaining days, no more, time is running fast, die, remembrance, declines, spent, grave, pass, no marks behind, end, better state*, and *heaven intends*. *This day* and *now* compete with *mortifying stuff* and lose. So indeed does Swift and his attempt to use reason to retain the present in the face of the future, to urge «[a] better and more pleasing Thought» (l. 10). Virtue, proper thoughts and good actions cannot die; they «leave behind / Some lasting Pleasure in the Mind, / Which by Remembrance will assuage, / Grief, Sickness, Poverty, and Age» (ll. 29-32). Intrusive reality follows at once. The remembrance must «shoot a radiant Dart, / To shine through Life's declining Part» (ll. 33-34).

The next paragraph eulogizes the not-yet departed. Surely she must feel contentment with her good actions, her skill in saving the sick from death, her defense of friends, and her detestation of vice. All these may induce contentment and leave radiant darts, but they also denote «a Life well spent» (l. 36), depleted. Swift acknowledges the power of that word *spent* as he asks questions whose answers he knows and dislikes. Is all this mere empty shadows or reflections? Mere speculative fantasies? He moves from the flimsy to the solid, to analogy that he hopes might reject the transience of happy illusion that must, with a repeated rhyme word again suggesting distance, «fly and leave no Marks behind» (l. 54). Food of twenty years ago sustained us through today, just as continued food sustains us thereafter, or we would die. Virtue in humanity is the «Nutriment that feeds the Mind» in the past and must continue to do so: «Then, who with Reason can pretend, / That all Effects of Virtue end?» (ll. 62, 65-66). By the next paragraph Swift no longer can ignore the «mortifying Stuff» of Stella's sickness. Yes, her earlier virtuous acts «join to fortify your Heart» and help her courageously to look «back with Joy where she has gone» (ll. 72, 75). Yet Swift knows that Virtue as guardian must go to Stella's deathbed: «She at your sickly Couch will wait, / And guide you to a better State» (ll. 77-78).

Swift has written an elegy in which at first he attempts neither to speak about nor to acknowledge his beloved's pending death. The attempt fails. He then seeks to reassure her that her life has been virtuous, admirable and ultimately rewarded in that «better State». He also finds that the elegy concerns the living more than the dead and his own soon vacant life rather than Stella's death, which neither Reason nor Swift's reasoning can change. In the final paragraph he is alone, grieving, and angry that he is alone and grieving. The plural «Friends» becomes the singular. *Me,*

me, my, I, and *I'm* conflict with *you* and *your.* The painful skirmish stresses Swift's new focus as the troubled survivor unable to change places with the soon untroubled invalid.

> Oh then, whatever Heav'n intends,
> Take Pity on your pitying Friends;
> Nor let your Ills affect your Mind,
> To fancy they can be unkind.
> Me, surely me, you ought to spare,
> Who gladly would your Suff'rings share;
> Or give my Scrap of Life to you,
> And think it far beneath your Due;
> You, to whose Care so oft I owe,
> That I'm alive to tell you so
> (ll. 79-88) (Williams 1958, vol. 2, pp. 763-764).[12]

Samuel Johnson understood Swift's grief and dismay, as in «Take pity on your pitying friends», in which the plural denotes Swift. Johnson's Swift lamented «the death of her whom he loved most, aggravated by the consciousness that himself had hastened it» and hastened his own alienation from the social world. After Stella's death, Swift reduced his benevolent acts, increased his severity, «drove his acquaintance from his table, and wondered why he was deserted». His bitterness «condemned him to solitude; and his resentment of solitude sharpened his asperity». Bereft Swift refused to wear spectacles, and stopped reading books and enlarging his ideas. He «left his mind vacant to the vexations of the hour» and then to madness because of his loss (Mittendorf 2010, pp. 1003, 1005-1006, 1007, and 1009). Johnson is excessive, but he recognized that Swift's relationship with Stella ultimately was destructive to himself as well as to her.

Swift indeed regards much of humanity as self-destructive or incapable of improvement – as in *Gulliver's Travels* and its final, if for many readers at the least improbable, norm. In a much discussed passage in Part IV, Chapter 12, Gulliver quotes Sinon from Virgil's *Aeneid*: «*Nec, si miserum Fortuna Sinonem / Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget*» (book 2, ll. 79-80; Conte 2009, p. 35). Though vile fortune has made Sinon wretched, she has not made him a liar, he mendaciously says as he persuades the war weary Trojans to take the horse into their city. Sinon later releases the Greeks within the horse and enables Troy's destruction. Swift brilliantly complicates the Sinon story. Pious Aeneas tells it to Dido as he,

12 Feingold observes of Swift's remark: «It is the value of his own life that he pleads for here». He adds that «of the results of the plea we can know nothing» (Feingold 1983, p. 194). Johnson thought otherwise, and probably is correct. See Feingold's valuable discussion of this 'Stella' poem, pp. 192-198.

his refugee Trojans, and their household gods journey toward a new home. The Medieval and Renaissance *Aeneid* often was read as an allegory of the soul growing to maturity. Rome rises as a secular empire and then as the spiritually civilizing church. So perceived, it was a story of success after failure. So viewed as well, Swift invites us to take his own rational horse into our proud internal city, allow it to destroy our pride and foster our rebuilding. He teases us toward that insight but soon rejects it. Gulliver cannot integrate with his family or nation; he laments his expulsion from Houyhnhnmland, increases his pride, and fails to see much else in humanity except «deformity and diseases both in body and mind» (Womersley 2012, pp. 437 and 443).[13] Aeneas's Rome was not built in a day. Swift's internal benign Rome seems not built at all, or perhaps only in so distant a time that not even mythic prediction can picture it.

Swift's 1735 letter from Gulliver to his cousin Richard Sympson supports two germane hypotheses regarding how Swift might communicate such norms as he offers. One is in overt statement. Gulliver angrily rejects the notion that his chief characters in Part IV «have no more Existence than the Inhabitants of *Utopia*» – Utopian, yes, but certainly real in their best values. Yet Gulliver does not care what British yahoos think of him: «I wrote for their Amendment, and not their Approbation». The «united Praise of the whole Race» means less to him than the wisdom imparted by «the two degenerate *Houyhnhnms* I keep in my Stable». The second hypothesis is that, by the mid 1720s and certainly by 1735, Swift, permanently bound to Ireland and permanently exiled from English seats of power, had largely abandoned attempts to reform the apparently unreformable Yahoos every where around him: «I should never have attempted so absurd a Project as that of reforming the *Yahoo* Race in this Kingdom; but I have now done with all such visionary Schemes for ever» (Womersley 2012, pp. 13-14).

Swift has shown that neither church nor state, neither ordinary humanity nor a beloved woman, neither epic precedent nor fantasized equine reason, are enduring and practical models. On whom or on what, then, can he ask himself and us to rely? He attempts to answer that question in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, where we will see a sadly defeated norm.

13 For allegorical readings of the *Aeneid*, see Baswell 1995, and Wilson-Okamura 2010. *Gulliver's Travels* and its fourth book in particular have generated much heat from 1726 forward. The editors of three relatively recent editions also include critical histories (Fox 1995; Rivero 2004; Hawes 2004). James L. Clifford's important essay lays out the two dominant modes of reading *Gulliver* (Clifford 1974). I take R. S. Crane's essay on Book IV to be definitive (Crane 1967). There also have been recent concerns with Swift's severity and his largely negative response to the 'Moderns'. For some of these, see Rawson 2002, Boyle 2000, Rothstein 2007, and Alff 2014. For Samuel Johnson's troubled relationship with Swift, see Weinbrot 2014. These citations can only suggest the large body of secondary literature on Swift and on *Gulliver's Travels.*

Verses on the Death is a muted conversational version of the Swiftian satiric catalogue of vices. Here, Swift ventures through human benevolence, friendship, collegiality, the publishing world, memory, and simple decency which is on very short rations indeed. He finally evokes a putative impartial spokesman at a public inn rather than at a church or parliament in which Swift should be celebrated. The nameless speaker of course largely is Swift himself, and is nearly as dark, if in a different way, as the speaker in that eulogy for Stella. Now, however, Swift contemplates the results of his own death rather than Stella's death.[14]

I suspect that Swift invents an anonymous persona because he fears that no one else will speak affirmatively for him and about him. He tries to become his own norm, to appear reasonably placid amidst a variously and broadly corrupt world. He «kept the Tenor of his Mind, / To merit well of human Kind» (ll. 361-362). So handsome but unlikely a pose soon collapses upon the cluster of negatives, like *ruin* and *slaughter,* that we have seen earlier. For Swift, Britain depended upon an Anglican monarch from a long legally established Anglican dynasty, however much politically defective when briefly Roman Catholic. There is no *ad exemplum regina* in so frail a culture if there is no Stuart queen. There once were «golden Dreams» (l. 372) regarding national greatness and the benign power of Queen Anne – from whom there were no royal heirs. The dream «Was all destroy'd by one Event. / Too soon that precious Life was ended, / On which alone, our Weal depended» (ll. 376-378). The nation's fate hangs from (as in Latin *dependere*) Queen Anne's life and throne, and now is detached and falling. Key words immediately thereafter include *dangerous Faction, Wrath and Vengeance, ruin, slaughter, confound, turn Religion to a Fable, make the Government a Babel, Pervert, Disgrace, Corrupt, rob, sacrifice,* and *in-*

14 For a discussion of the complex publishing history of this poem, see Karian 2010, pp. 166-204 (which includes and enlarges two of Karian's earlier essays on the subject and gives useful histories of scholarship on the matter); see also Erskine-Hill 2008. John Irwin Fischer provides a useful overview of critical discussion of the poem from about 1967 to 1978 (Fischer 1978, pp. 153-154, n. 2). One aspect of such criticism is the eulogist-narrator's representation of Swift, which from his own time forward has made Swift seem either vain, misunderstanding his own history, or so ironic as to be puzzling. James Woolley, however, argues that «the eulogy as a whole is far closer to a serious representation of Swift than is sometimes supposed». If the eulogy characterizes a myth regarding Swift, «it is a myth he himself took seriously» (Woolley 1981, p. 120). This seems to me correct. Other interpretations of this aspect of perhaps Swift's best poem vary. For Peter Schakel it «continue Swift's concern with being ignored, unrecognized, and forgotten, and supplies the theory which accounts for it» (Schakel, p. 127). For Pat Rogers, Swift confronts death «with a sense of courage and humanity, so that the final effect is more consolatory than depressing» (Rogers 2003, p. 177). Howard Erskine-Hill thinks the poem an *ars moriendi* in which Swift bravely acknowledges his defeat in life and in his culture hereafter: «This is no insignificant act of humility» (Erskine-Hill 2008, p. 157). Rogers rightly says that «we are still far from reaching a consensus on the drift of the *Verses*» (Rogers 2003, p.185). Schakel and Woolley seem to me the most persuasive. Swift sounds like an angry man who resents his varied losses and says so in varied ways.

famous. All this supports the paragraph's final couplet: «When such a Tempest shook the Land, / How could unguarded Virtue stand?» (ll. 389-391). She cannot. Swift, the Dean of St. Patrick's, flirts with politically induced sin when he responds «[w]ith Horror, Grief, Despair» as he beholds «the dire destructive Scene» (ll. 391-392; Williams 1958). On Swift's scenario, Queen Anne's 'precious' life preserves the threatened Anglican church and state; it also resists the trauma of political tempests that blow virtue away upon the accession of the Lutheran German Georges and their Whig allies. Swift finds himself forced to rely upon Anne alone because he cannot rely upon the institutions that are supposed to support her and the nation.

That grim defeat is sexual, national, and cosmic. Virtue as both image and actor traditionally was female and regularly was so used by Pope and by Swift.[15] Governments should protect political virtue. Since parliamentary and ministerial government is entirely male, its job includes protecting the vulnerable woman, whether Queen Anne or personified Virtue. It does neither. Yet more, as Ephraim Chambers made plain in 1728, Virtue's 'various significations' extended beyond the secular to denote the «*Power*, or *Perfection* of any Thing, whether Natural or Super-natural." In its "more proper […] Sense, *Virtue* signifies a Habit, which improves and perfects the […] Possessor, and his Actions». Virtue thus is «a Principle of acting, or doing well and readily; and that, either infused from above, such as are the *Theological Virtues*; or acquired by our own Application, as the *Intellectual* and *Moral Virtues».* The Virtues also are in the third rank of angels in heaven's hierarchy; they have the power both to work miracles and to reinforce «the inferior Angels in the Exercise of their Functions» (Chambers 1728, vol. 2, pp. 311-312, s.v. *Virtue*).[16]

The complex meanings of *Virtue* suggest a covert inference: for Swift, the newly Georgian Whig government's wrath, vengeance, ruin, and slaughter indeed attack «old *England*'s Glory» (l. 387). As he also may suggest, in the process they attack God, angels, and the good inner morality

15 For an example of female Virtue other than in the *Verses*, see Swift's unsigned *The Birth of Manly Virtue From Callimacus* (Dublin, 1725); later publishers added the words «Inscribed to his Excellency the Lord Carteret». For Pope, see *Epilogue to the Satires* […] *Dialogue I*, ll. 113, 137, 150; *Epilogue* […] *Dialogue II*, ll. 95, 119, 199, 218 (Butt 1961, pp. 306-309, 318-325). At line 95 Pope sings: «I follow *Virtue*, where she shines, I praise». At line 119 he is optimistic but may echo Swift: «No Pow'r, when Virtue claims it, can withstand». The poem nevertheless ends in defeat by the reigning political dispensation. In 1740 Pope writes the unfinished, fragment, *1740. A Poem*: «The plague is on thee, Britain, and who tries / To save thee in th' infectious office *dies*» (ll. 74-75). Like Swift before him, Pope turns to one person, here Frederick, Prince of Wales, George II's estranged son and an Opposition hero: «Alas! On one alone our all relies, / Let him be honest, and he must be wise / […] And one man's honesty redeem the land» (ll. 85-86, 98; Butt 1961, pp. 336-337). Like Swift, Pope too loses (politically ineffectual Frederick died in 1751; his eldest son became George III in 1760).

16 Readers surely noted that Virtue here is as unsuccessful in protecting a beloved woman as it was in the final poem to Stella.

that produces external morality. The wish to make «golden Dreams» real has become the nightmare Swift thinks he sees around him. No wonder he responds with horror.

No wonder as well that the poem's swerve to Ireland also reflects pain and grievance, both in the poem's text and in the prose notes so essential for the text's meaning. Upon Swift's return to Dublin in August of 1727, English enemies attacked him as a Jacobite; he was insulted in public; and he required armed guards to protect him at night. Others gained preferment; he gained friends who became enemies (ll. 399-406). His *Drapier's Letters* saved Ireland from financial ruin, but those «who reapt the Profit, sought his Blood» (l. 414). Judge Whitshed tried to punish him and his printer for pamphlets urging the Irish to use their own manufactures and to reject Wood's half-pence. Swift's alter-ego speaker images him as victimized by an Irish blood-thirsty «wicked Monster on the Bench» (l. 417). Swift does not see Dublin as his home, but as his place of exile distant from his true friends (ll. 431-434). Such friends as he has there are of the middle rank, but he nonetheless acquired local enemies whom he could not reform. «He vented oft his Wrath in vain» against the exploitive, criminal, rent-racking rural squires (ll. 444-454). He may have been too satyrical now and again, but he never was malicious. By the time we reach the *Verses*' final six lines, we hear a defeated, angry, self-justifying man behind the fallen mask of a speaker once «quite indiff'rent» who «[m]y Character impartial draws» (ll. 305-306). He lost that putative impartiality, and he has learned the lesson that Swift taught him: the Irish are insane and foolish, certainly in part because they failed at the government level, if not at the Irish people's level, to honor, respect, and reward Jonathan Swift.

> He gave the little Wealth he had,
> To build a House for Fools and Mad:
> And shew'd by one satyric Touch,
> No Nation wanted it so much:
> That Kingdom he hath left his Debtor,
> I wish it soon may have a Better
> (ll. 479-484) (Williams 1958; vol. 2, p. 572).

The poem's final couplet is both accusatory and ambiguous regarding the ungrateful Irish nation. William King carried Swift's manuscript from Dublin to England. Upon reading it and even after conferring with Pope and others, he found it confusing and ungrammatical. He asked: «a *better* what?» (Woolley 1999-2014, vol. 4, p. 563; 'William King to Mrs. Whiteway', 6 March 1738).[17] Whomever «*better*» refers to, or whether Swift

17 King thus printed the final couplet in what became *The Life and Character of Dr. Swift*

ironically and sternly says that Ireland does not have a Better, it cannot improve unless causation magically changes. Human nature in general, English nature in particular as Ireland's rulers, and Irish nature even more particularly refuse to correct the vices Swift identifies. He defeated the «infamous destructive Cheat» (l. 408) of Wood's half pence, but he could not defeat the human evils attacked in *Gulliver's Travels*. *Verses on the Death* tries to present its norms through the final speaker's early values that, in theory, reflect the best of Swift's character and achievement. As the passage progresses, it changes from cool affirmation, social engagement, and upward mobility, to anger, detachment, and the isolation of the grave. Earlier in the poem we read that the Dean «Was never ill receiv'd at Court» (l. 308).[18] By the end of the poem we read about Swift's bequest to help Ireland's «Fools and Mad» (l. 480; Williams 1958; vol. 2, p. 572) amongst whom he was required to live – and die. He preferred to do so in England, from which he felt himself banished, to which he asked to have his greatest poem delivered, and in which it was badly mangled before being sorted out years later.

We can summarize aspects of the norms in Jonathan Swift's arts. The attractive, friendly, and unthreatening world of the Market Hill poems cannot last. In *A Tale of a Tub* the primary paternal norm soon disappears and is replaced by aberration, dislocation, tyranny, madness, and a frail ecclesiastical norm in political, religious, and existential danger. In *Gulliver's Travels* neither classical nor institutional norms work in today's world, and the horses' admirable government by reason seems better for invented equine than real human abilities. In *Stella's Birthday* the death of a beloved woman becomes betrayal: «Me, surely, me, you ought to spare» (Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 766). In *Verses on the Death* Swift invents a presumably fair and accurate stranger, perhaps the only one who can praise Swift's best traits – to no avail in the face of Swift's own emotional eruptions, defeat, and death. After such experiences, we well can understand why he hates «all nations, professions, and communities» and cannot «have peace of mind till all honest men are of [his] opinion». Given that impossibility, Swift lacked that peace of mind, could not see Virtue stand, and found that if there is only one person «On which alone, our Weal depended» that horror, grief, and despair were probable. We nonetheless should not stop there.

(1733) that he and Alexander Pope edited from Swift's larger manuscript: «Then, since you *dread* no further *Lashes*, / You freely *may forgive his Ashes*» (Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 550).

18 For the most recent rejection of Swift's fantasy of power at court, see Winn 2014, pp. 578 and 622. Swift ignored the warning not to publish the offensive «Windsor Prophecy» that slandered the Duchess of Somerset, Queen Anne's Groom of the Stole. This offense supplements, or perhaps replaces, the usual view that Queen Anne refused a bishopric to Swift because of *A Tale of a Tub*.

3 Ears of Corn and Blades of Grass

It would be understandable if we concluded that Swift's search for workable norms ended in anarchy, despair, and chaos. He well-depicts these in his late *A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club* (1736). The Irish parliament consists of «Many a Head that holds no Brains» (l. 10); these heads diabolically plan to ruin church and state, «plague and starve the City» (l. 54) and «Tear the Bible all to Pieces» (l. 66). Such incorrigible creatures deserve whipping and, Swift concludes, «May their God, the Devil confound 'em» (l. 242; Williams 1958, vol. 3, pp. 829, 831). Yet we confuse the relatively large darker part with the sometimes bright much larger whole if we take anger and anguish as Swift's only message. We also would ignore harsh and punitive satire's essential trait of overstatement in order to force attention to a serious problem. Swift claims that Irish legislators worship the devil and thus, he hopes, awakens us to their presumed threat to orthodox religion and national interest. Excess evokes awareness, which evokes attention, which, he again hopes, might check decay. Swift thus does not often provide comfort, but does evoke a norm that requires reorientation or significant stretching of our own norms. For example, in the *Verses* on his death he rightly says that, «Fair LIBERTY was all his Cry» (l. 347; Williams 1958, vol. 2, p. 566), for which he would give his life. Hatred of English colonialism in Ireland aside, however, that concept of "liberty" is more constrained than are such concepts in twenty-first century values. In general, then, we can look for Swift's norms under three overlapping rubrics: political and religious stability, checks upon human ambition and pride, and simple good sense that joins men and women with shared concerns.

For example, Swift surely believed that both the British limited constitutional monarchy and the Church of England were bound by Christian principles, national law, and the ethical conduct inherent in each. Church and state, if reluctantly, protected their opponents unless they became enemies and forfeited protective law. The state carefully balances the individual's right to freedom against the nation's right to order. Swift's concern for institutions, his understanding of the English civil war, and his fear of new dynasties lead to searches for stability. In such a scenario, free speech and religious dissent may be limited if thought to encourage instability. As Swift says in the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, enemies of religion in general and of Christianity in particular are so because «by laying Restraints on human Nature» they desirably restrict «Freedom of Thought and Action» (Davis 1966, vol. 2, p. 38). The King of Brobdingnag extends such restraint to politics. He tells Gulliver that those «who entertain Opinions prejudicial to the Publick» should not be obliged to change them but, in a term alien to much modern thought, should be «obliged to conceal them». It would be tyranny to disallow those thoughts, and destructive

weakness not to enforce the censorship: «For, a Man may be allowed to keep Poisons in his Closet, but not to vend them about as Cordials» (Womersley 2012, p. 187). Law and religion should restrain some corrupt human action. Law governs both the crown and the crown's subjects who need constant reminders of their proper, limited, place in the nation and the universe. If freedom is poison disguised as a cordial, it should indeed be restrained both in the church and the state to which it is intimately connected. Politics and religion cannot be separated. Tories were the Church party; Whigs were not and, for Swift, promoted disorder. Fair Liberty is a norm; but it should be constrained if it threatens stability, without which true liberty is impossible.

Alexander Pope inadvertently alluded to one of Swift's points of reference in human life and action–pride and its affront to God's plan. The first part of Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734) thus states: «In Pride, in reas'ning Pride, our error lies» (ll. 123-30; Mack 1950, pp. 30-31). Pope extends the image to the angels' revolt against God. Swift is more secular in this case, but both he and Pope ask us to learn the limits of the self, to accept our small role in the large world, and to accept modest triumphs as major achievements. In social as in religious and political life, restraint and acceptance of the quotidian should, but rarely do, dominate. Swift endorses the King of Brobdingnag's wisdom regarding government, justice, and agriculture as a form of human nourishment and morality–which, typically for Swift, are both desirable and largely absent from British life. His giant majesty deplored princely or ministerial intrigues, mysteries, and «*Secrets of State*». Government should function within «very *Narrow Bounds*» and look to

> common Sense and Reason, to Justice and Lenity, to the Speedy Determination of Civil and criminal Causes [...] And, he gave it for his Opinion, that whoever could make two Ears of Corn, or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before; would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his Country, than the whole Race of Politicians put together (Womersley 2012, p. 194).

Intelligent common sense extends to human relations. In the *Progress of Marriage* (1722, 1765) a marriage that begins as a conceptual failure becomes a marital failure. A wealthy 52-year old clerical Dean receives permission to court and marry an empty-headed young woman «[n]early related to an Earl» (l. 4). The adult, the coquettish post-adolescent, and her family share blame for a relationship that ends with the Dean's fatal illness in Bath where he fancied he could conceive an heir. She inherits his estate, marries a rake-ensign who throws her out of her own home, spends her fortune on his whores, and leaves her the present of a «rooted Pox to last for ever» (l. 66). The pox becomes the emblem of an infectious destruc-

tive marriage. As so often in Swift's work, and certainly so in many of his poems about women and men, he expresses his obvious norm in a negative statement. Older husband and younger wife must differ, for they lack a

> common Ligament that binds
> The various Textures of their Minds,
> Their Thoughts, and Actions, Hopes, and Fears,
> Less corresponding than their Years
> (ll. 33-36) (Williams 1958, vol. 1, pp. 289-295).[19]

The binding common ligament is emotional, psychological, and intellectual rather than physical, but it is a clear norm and guide. The statement is intelligently sensible: human beings who share values are more likely to get along than those who do not share values.

Stability, restraints upon ambition, and shared rather than competing human interests in human relations of course also are under regular threat in Swift's world, as they are in ours. Queen Anne's fallible but basically decent reign was Swift's emblem of stable Anglican monarchy. Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, was Swift's emblem of the restrained political power. Harley oversaw the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that ended the War of the Spanish Succession, in which victorious Marlborough was so bloody. The *Market Hill* poems are emblems of amiable domestic family relations, in which Swift briefly was included. His *Stella* poems are emblems of more than amiable binding ligaments – for a time. Swift's greatness consists in part of his regular portrayal of the consequences of ignoring those norms, including the implicit self-indictment of his final poem to Stella. It also consists in his refusal to stop labeling corruption, wherever it might be. We pay a high price for an uncertain, incoherent world in which costly ambition, lack of connection, and moral and political decay too often are paramount. The *Drapier's Letters* excepted, Swift lost his battles but continued the fight, as he perhaps hoped that we would, however much he wrote for our amendment and not our approbation.

19 Swift's relationship to women has been much discussed. Other than studies of specific poems, see Pollak 1985, Doody 2003, Mell 1996, Barnett 2007 (especially pp. 124-153, and 154-170). The terms «Hopes, and Fears» recall a comparable line in Samuel Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). After several failures of human desire to find happiness based on human ambition, Johnson's reader asks: «Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?» Johnson's answer is that «petitions yet remain, / Which heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain» (ll. 343, 349.350; McAdam 1964, pp. 107-108). Johnson can urge such petitions because in the poem he separates religion from politics, as Swift could not.

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«The Multiplicity of Agreeable Consciousness»
Samuel Johnson's Sceptical Philosophy of Terrestrial Happiness

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Abstract Samuel Johnson's life was troubled by diverse physical diseases and – one year before his death – he experienced a stroke. Moreover, he suffered from recurring fits of depression. But Johnson was also merry, loved witty conversations, good food and his nightly tours through London pubs. Johnson maintained that pleasure and pain were closely connected with each other. In both his dialogues with James Boswell and in his comprehensive literary works, Johnson reveals a philosophy of happiness characterized by a radical skepticism reminiscent of Michel de Montaigne's Pyrrhonism. Influenced by Richard Burton, Thomas Browne and Francis Bacon, Johnson developed his specific doctrine of eudaemonic idols: as an idiosyncratic representative of Enlightenment philosophy he examined and questioned traditional *clichès* of happiness such as Stoicism, natural philosophy, learning, and marriage. Though not completely denying the possibility of earthly happiness, which he defined as the «multiplicity of agreeable consciousness», he was convinced that all earthly pleasures were doomed to fade away. As «a gloomy gazer on a world» to which he had «little relation», Johnson gave up any hope of attaining happiness on earth and exclusively trusted in felicity beyond the grave.

1 Introduction: Happiness as a Central Theme in Samuel Johnson's Literary Works

All of Johnson's major works such as *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), *The Rambler* (1750-1752), *The Idler* (1758-1760), and of course *Rasselas* (1759), delve deep into the mysteries of human happiness; 'felicity' – together with 'hope', 'delusion', 'religion', and 'death' – may be identified as one of the pivotal centres of his philosophy. In the history of ideas, Johnson's eudaemonism is of great significance, since it both summarizes and transcends traditional views of happiness. As one of the most learned

men of his century, who had edited his famous *Dictionary* (1755) almost single-handed, as a scholar and polymath, who probably knew more books than any other man alive (Bate 1984, pp. 240-260, also p. 35), Johnson was intensely familiar with the roots of the philosophy of happiness in ancient times and the many ideas that were developed by later philosophers during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. On the one hand, Johnson's moral weeklies may be interpreted as complex compendia of the time-honoured wisdom of learned Europe. On the other hand, they clearly represent the sceptical notions of Enlightenment philosophy that was no longer willing to take any natural or moral laws for granted.

2 Johnson between Happiness, Despair and Melancholy

Even if James Boswell may be blamed for constructing the myth of that arch-conservative Dr Johnson, who «talked for victory» and who loved to bully his intellectual friends with the sheer amount of his learning (Chapman 1970, p. 1150), nobody can deny his achievements as Johnson's first serious biographer. Boswell describes Johnson as an extremely complex character, deeply immersed in both the happiness and misery of eighteenth-century reality. Many anecdotes presented in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791) prove that Johnson was by no means averse to happiness (Weinbrot 2012, pp. 195-207). As Tom Davies observed, Johnson could laugh «like a rhinoceros»; he loved to drink wine and revealed an almost insatiable appetite for food, perhaps only topped by that of Henry Thrale, in whose family he spent so many happy hours of his life (Chapman 1970, pp. 637, 746, and 349-350). There can be no doubt that he experienced a brief spell of happiness in his marriage to Elizabeth Porter, at least until she started to drink and become more and more morose in the course of her own rather bleak life (Bate 1984, pp. 236-239). In his literary club, Johnson spent many happy hours in conversation with the coterie of his intellectual friends, among them David Garrick, Edmund Burke and Oliver Goldsmith (pp. 366-367).[1] He accompanied Bennet Langton and Topham Beauclerk on their pub-crawls through London (p. 346), which – to him and Boswell – appeared to be a kind of earthly paradise. He enjoyed the fast drive in a post-chaise, ideally in the company of a pretty woman, as he proclaimed (Chapman 1970, p. 845; Gross 2001, pp. 199-253). When Mrs Thrale prompted him to tell her about the happiest moment of his life, Johnson did not hesitate to confess that it was an unforgettable evening with the beautiful Molly Aston, whom he admired intensely: «That indeed

1 For a similar view of the 'happy Johnson', see Foldare 1984, pp. 17-44, who observes that for Johnson happiness consists of accumulating 'new ideas' (p. 18).

(said he) was not happiness, it was rapture; but the thoughts of it sweetened the whole year» (Bate 1984, p. 184).

But apart from these happy events, Johnson's life was so overshadowed by calamities that Boswell feels entitled to describe his existence as a «narrative of misery» (Chapman 1970, p. 1347). Due to his mother's unfortunate decision, Johnson was sent to a wet nurse who probably infected him with scrofula. His childhood was marred by almost constant affliction (Bate 1984, pp. 6-7); later in life Johnson confessed sadly to Sir John Hawkins that «he knew not what it was to be totally free from pain» (p. 10). As a child, and then afterwards again as a student at Oxford (p. 126), Johnson had to face poverty, and forever he refused to see it in a romantic light and declared it «a great enemy to human happiness» (Chapman 1970, pp. 1189-1190). When he grew older, the scrofula caused asthma and emphysema; the gout also tormented him. His letters to Giuseppe Baretti, James Boswell, and the Thrale family prove how deeply Johnson suffered from the effects of the terrible stroke that probably led to his death in 1784 (Bate 1984, p. 575). Pain, paralysis, lack of speech, and an ever-increasing degree of social isolation made him feel miserable thorughout his life. Moreover, Johnson was attacked by bouts of what Boswell characterizes as a «morbid melancholy» (Chapman 1970, p. 47),[2] recurring fits of despair and gloom that made him wish to «escape from himself» with the help of wine, the entertainments of theatre, or even lexicography (pp. 106, 258, 974, 136). In Johnson's case, this dismal mental state was no minor indisposition but a grave psychological chronic illness,[3] which would probably be diagnosed as severe depression nowadays (p. 427). This radical melancholy prevented him not only from being happy but, one might even say, from being alive; he was paralysed and unable to move or act;[4] as his friends discreetly mention in their letters, Johnson was on the verge of committing suicide when this despair set in. In those moments the staunch believer Johnson was about to lose his religion, to «see God in clouds» (p. 791) – if at all – and to sympathize with Hume's atheism.[5] After meeting Johnson on one of these occasions, Boswell recalls that Johnson proclaimed: «I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits» (p. 342). Boswell frequently

2 «The "morbid melancholy", [...] gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation of the year 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery». For the long literary history of melancholia, see Horstmann 1985.

3 Johnson may have been afflicted with the Tourette syndrome (Weinbrot 2012, p. 196).

4 See Chapman 1970, p. 48: «He told Mr. Paradise that he was sometimes so languid and inefficient, that he could not distinguish the hour upon the town-clock».

5 See Chapman 1970, p. 314: «Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote».

refers to Johnson's melancholy and uses it as an explanation for his often rude conversational behavior towards friends:

> Let the most censorious of my readers suppose himself to have a violent fit of the tooth-ach, or to have received a severe stroke on the shin-bone, and when in such a state to be asked a question; and if he has any candour, he will not be surprized at the answers which Johnson sometimes gave in moments of irritation, which, let me assure them, is exquisitely painful (p. 989).

These terrifying fits of melancholy may also explain the mystery about the 'padlock' and the 'fetters', which – together with the enigmatic French letter Johnson wrote to Mrs Thrale – sensational biographers like to treat as unambiguous symptoms of Johnson's masochistic sexual behavior (Wain 1980, pp. 286-292), The truth, however, is that Johnson may have used them as a last resort to avoid injuring or killing himself, until Mrs Thrale took them away (Bate 1984, p. 385). Johnson, the unfailing defender of rationality, feared nothing more than the loss of his intellectual capacity. For him, melancholia threatened to lead towards insanity.[6] There is at least one instance in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* which clearly reveals the symptoms of a severe disturbance of Johnson's sanity; virtually driven to madness by unbearable feelings of both guilt and despair, Johnson is described kneeling in front of Reverend Delap and uttering a torrent of confused sentences, until Mr Thrale shut Johnson's mouth with his hand (p. 407).

3 The Particular Nature of Johnson's Eudaemonism

Johnson's eudaemonism can be described as a syncretic *mélange* composed of various ingredients culled from the doctrines of Callicles, Plato and Aristotle (Spaemann 1974, pp. 679-707), but he was also familiar with the history of the idea of happiness from Stoicism to the Scholastic tradition of the Middle Ages. Johnson shares Plato's idea that happiness has to be associated with the 'good' and the 'beautiful' (Griffin 1998, pp. 227-228), and the entry in his own *Dictionary* reminds the reader of Callicles, who thought that happiness consisted in satisfying one's desires: «Felicity; state in which the desires are satisfied» (Lynch 2002, p. 232). More important, however, is Richard Hooker's definition, also quoted by Johnson: «*Happiness* is that estate whereby we attain, so far as possibly may be attained, the full possession of that which simply for itself is to be

6 See Chapman 1970, pp. 49, 790-791. It is no wonder that Johnson presents the portrait of the mad astronomer in *Rasselas* in his analysis of happiness (Enright 1984b, pp. 127-128).

desired, and containeth in it after an eminent sort the contentation of our desires, the highest degree of all our perfection» (Lynch 2002, p. 232). Hooker and Johnson believe that happiness can never simply be a means; it always has to be an 'end' to an action: happiness is meaningful in itself and cannot be actively pursued but must be imagined as a welcome by-product of human activities, which – and this is self-evident – have to be invariably virtuous.[7] Furthermore, by citing John Locke's definition of happiness – «that every one does not place his happiness in the same thing» (Lynch 2002, p. 233) – Johnson emphasizes the strong individualistic and even idiosyncratic nature of felicity:

> The commonest of commonplaces is that 'happiness' can never be found if consciously and deliberately looked for (and weighted in the balance against the expectant imagination), but occurs only as a by-product when we lose ourselves in something else. Yet, after all he [Johnson] had written, and though he had rediscovered the truth of this time and again, he was himself repeatedly using 'happiness' as a yardstick with which to measure and evaluate life. That he should be so passionate in maintaining the futility of 'happiness' as a goal or end in itself showed only how persistent an obsession it was (Bate 1984, p. 380).

Johnson's intellect allowed for repetition of ultraconservative tenets, but at the same time he astounded his audience by giving free rein to the most rebellious and heretical ideas; Boswell witnessed him defending the Inquisition and finding arguments for torturing; then, again, Johnson showed so much humanity, empathy and benevolence towards prostitutes that no one could suspect him of moralistic severity (Chapman 1970, pp. 329-331, 323). Boswell, proud of justifying the achievements brought about by slavery, was brusquely rebuffed by Johnson who evinced his solidarity with slaves even bringing out a toast: «Here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies» (pp. 876, 878 ff.). Similar contradictory behavior may also be found in his treatment of the theme of happiness.

The first and most significant prerequisite for the state of happiness is the awareness of man as a social being, a *zoon politikon*. Johnson was pretty sure that social isolation inevitably led to grief and melancholy. As the dialogues with Boswell show, Johnson let no opportunity pass for casting abuse on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom he criticized severely for his philosophy of nature; no man, Johnson thought, could be happy if he tried to regain the former state of primitive natural living; for 'modern' man,

7 For Johnson, obedience to God was an indispensable precondition for human happiness; see Chapman 1970, p. 373.

the respect gained in a social context is of a vital importance;[8] when Mr Dempster recommended 'merit' as the single source of happiness, this is how Johnson refuted his notion:

> If man were a savage, living in the woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilized society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, Sir, in civilized society, external advantages make us more respected (pp. 310-311).

The conversations in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, however, do not always represent Johnson's unadulterated ideas with regard to happiness; a reader familiar with Johnson's analysis of prosperity in *Rasselas* will probably be surprised to find Johnson argue in favour of riches in his dialogues with friends; the explanation may be that in society, Johnson quite often talked «for victory» (p. 528) and that a spirit of rebellion together with the sheer pleasure of contradicting made Johnson utter the most inconsistent ideas in different contexts. Whereas Imlac and Rasselas learn that riches do not guarantee happiness, Johnson reveals a rather 'commonsense' opinion when he talks to his friends; as a *zoon politikon*, man depends on money and cannot afford to despise it:

> Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one; but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune: for, *cæteris paribus* [*sic*], he who is rich in a civilized society, must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used, (and it is a man's own fault if they are not,) must be productive of the highest advantages (p. 311).

The accumulation of details emerging in a social context make life worth living and present the mind with the necessary impulses «to get rid» of oneself (pp. 106, 974); this is precisely the reason why Johnson was of the opinion that a man «who is tired of London, is tired of life» (p. 859). London, with its plethora of visual, acoustic, and olfactory excitements, its street signs, advertisements, its innumerable streets, churches, bridges, pubs,[9] clubs and coffee houses was the worldly embodiment of the abstract idea of happiness.[10] The orchestra of human voices, the assorted gallery

8 See Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 130: «Happiness is not found in self-contemplation; it is perceived only when it is reflected from another».

9 See Chapman 1970, p. 697: «No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn».

10 See Chapman 1970, pp. 405-6: «The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom». See also p. 1014.

of rogues and simpletons, the ever-changing scenes in the street or on the Thames, the plurality of opinions revealed in coffee houses and magazines guaranteed that «multiplicity of agreeable consciousness» (p. 357) which, for Johnson, was a definition of happiness. And it is this specific combination of details which ensures happiness:

> Pound St. Paul's Church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing: but, put all these atoms together, and you have St. Paul's Church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shewn to be very insignificant (p. 311).

Johnson definitively recommends the observation of tiny details that may enable a person to lead a happy life; talking about diaries and the relevance of entries, Johnson tells Boswell: «There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible» (p. 307).

However, in Johnson's view, this awareness of one's surroundings should not be confounded with a dependence on the conditions of «external circumstances» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, p. 30). Johnson keeps on reprimanding Boswell for being too susceptible to the changes of the weather and – though no friend of Zeno and his disciples (pp. 174-179) – he would even recommend a modicum of Stoicism as a therapy against the «vicissitudes of life».[11] Johnson believed in a clearly structured community, ruled by the principles of universal «subordination, as most conducive to the happiness of society. There is a reciprocal pleasure in governing and being governed» (Chapman 1970, pp. 289, 924). But even the form of government or the political nature of the state one lives in seems to be of no major importance if one wants to lead a happy life (p. 477). This independence from outward conditions of existence is indicative of Johnson's growing insight into the psychological aspects of happiness. He knew that the «fountain of content must spring up in the mind» and that those who «seek happiness» cannot change anything but their own «disposition» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, p. 35). Johnson recognized that happiness must be defined as an ephemeral mental state,[12] dependent on various complex factors permanently subjected to modification, a process rather than a status that immediately ceases to exist once it has been reached.[13] Happiness can

11 See, for example, *Rambler* No. 203 (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 5, p. 292); see also Enright 1984b, p. 136.

12 In *Rambler* No. 151 Johnson develops his theory of the «climactericks of the mind» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 5, pp. 38-39),.

13 See also Ducrocq 1984, p. 126: «Le bonheur est donc moins dans la fin que dans le movement qui conduit vers cette fin». For Johnson's indebtedness to David Hume, see Potkay 1998, pp. 170-174.

never really be defined, let alone ‘fixed’; its nature is precarious, prone to sudden alterations and abrupt modifications, and as Locke’s quotation in the *Dictionary* indicates (Lynch 2002, p. 233), happiness is always a highly individual experience bordering on idiosyncrasy.

Johnson clearly distinguishes between ‘happiness’ and ‘pleasure’. Considered from a psychological point of view, many instances of ‘happiness’ turn out to be merely ‘pleasures’ of a baser origin: to be happy with a woman does not «mean conversation, but something of a very different nature. Philosophers tell you, that pleasure is contrary to happiness» (Chapman 1970, p. 912). The proverbial happiness of sailors is refuted by the following remark: «They are happy as brutes are happy, with a piece of fresh meat, – with the grossest sensuality» (p. 927). Drinking wine, for instance, might lead the drunken person to think that he or she is happier but, according to Johnson, this idea is erroneous, since drink only enhances the multitude of pleasures. Not to drink wine is a «diminution of pleasure, to be sure; but I do not say a diminution of happiness. There is more happiness in being rational» (p. 911). As the analysis of *Rasselas* will show, happiness is not exclusively the object of sensualism and cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of physical desires alone. Happiness is also an intellectual and psychological phenomenon, difficult to obtain and even more difficult to preserve: it is the ephemeral product of a train of thought. Happiness is fickle and depends on mood, even on the physical condition of the body; Boswell quotes a Turkish lady who had been educated in France: «*Ma foi, Monsieur, notre bonheur dépend de la façon que notre sang circule*» (p. 243). The impossibility of the Faustian wish to make a happy moment last forever (Goethe 1970, p. 52) permeates Johnson’s psychological theory of happiness:

> Being pressed upon this subject, and asked if he really was of opinion, that though, in general, happiness was very rare in human life, a man was not sometimes happy in the moment that was present, he answered, «Never, but when he is drunk» (Chapman 1970, pp. 617-8).

4 The Ephemeral Character of Happiness: Johnson as Sceptic and Pessimist

Johnson deflates any belief in the existence of solid enjoyment: «Life is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment» (Chapman 1970, p. 754). The nature of desires changes throughout one’s life, «since our tastes greatly alter. The lad does not care for the child’s rattle, and the old man does not care for the young man’s whore» (p. 361). Since the present is unable to afford reliable instances of happiness, man projects them into the future and hopes to obtain

them at some later time. Johnson adumbrates the essentially asymptotic character of any attempt to attain happiness.[14] But these kinds of hope are themselves modest manifestations of happiness: «Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords: but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged, must end in disappointment» (p. 261; also p. 442).[15]

Johnson's eudaemonism is radically individualistic, psychological and relative. He knows that happiness must be measured against the backdrop of a complex psychological system of emotionality, but also of intellectuality. Happiness is not the same for everyone:

> I mentioned Hume's notion, that all who are happy are equally happy; a little miss with a new gown at a dancing school ball, a general at the head of a victorious army, and an orator, after having made an eloquent speech in a great assembly. JOHNSON. «Sir, that all who are happy, are equally happy, is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally *satisfied*, but not equally *happy*. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher». I remember this very question very happily illustrated in opposition to Hume, by the Reverend Mr. Robert Brown, at Utrecht. «A small drinking-glass and a large one, (said he,) may be equally full; but the large one holds more than the small» (p. 357; see also p. 945).

If London – or any other great metropolis – may be looked upon as one of the *outward* prerequisites of happiness, the rich intellect and the learned mind of a philosopher have to be regarded as the inward precondition of happiness.

The philosophy described so far, however, is only a part of Johnson's complex eudaemonism, which, probably, belongs to the most pessimistic views of earthly human happiness to be encountered in the European history of ideas. Boswell witnessed Johnson's pessimism in countless instances, and he came to doubt it:

> It was observed to Dr. Johnson, that it seemed strange that he, who has so often delighted his company by his lively and brilliant conversation,

14 In *Rambler* No. 67, Johnson illustrates the asymptotic nature of happiness by telling an allegorical story about a garden in which the fruits always disappear when one wants to pluck them (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, p. 355).

15 Compare this quotation with *The Idler* No. 59: «Yet it is necessary to hope, tho' hope should always be deluded, for hope itself is happiness, and its frustrations, however frequent, are yet less dreadful than its extinction» (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 182).

> should say he was miserable. JOHNSON. «Alas! it is all outside; I may be cracking my joke, and cursing the sun. *Sun, how I hate thy beams*!» I knew not well what to think of this declaration; whether to hold it as a genuine picture of his mind, or as the effect of his persuading himself contrary to fact, that the position which he had assumed as to human unhappiness, was true. We may apply to him a sentence in Mr. Greville's *Maxims, Characters, and Reflections*; a book which is entitled to much more praise than it has received: «ARISTARCHUS is charming: how full of knowledge, of sense, of sentiment. You get him with difficulty to your supper; and after having delighted every body and himself for a few hours, he is obliged to return home; – he is finishing his treatise, to prove that unhappiness is the portion of man» (pp. 1300-1301).

Boswell's impression of Johnson, however, is probably wrong; being so much younger than his mentor, and also – despite occasional fits of melancholy – being also so much happier than him, as his famous, or rather notorious, *London Journal* (1762-1763, published 1950) proves (Pottle 2004), Boswell was not able to understand the older man's sadness and despair. There is no reason to disbelieve Johnson when he confesses that after the death of his wife Tetty he felt «broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any direction, or fixed point of view: a gloomy gazer on a world to which I have little relation» (Chapman 1970, p. 196). Johnson's childhood experiences, his despair, his lifelong anxieties, his feeling of guilt, his thanatophobia, and his fear of eternal damnation (p. 1296) had left indelible traces in his mind. As a «gloomy gazer» he did not feel at home in a world characterized by absurdity. Johnson had had his experiences, more than he had wished for, and he was not willing to ignore them; by way of induction he tried to develop universal rules from his own insights into the nature of the world and the state of happiness therein.[16] He was not prepared to let himself be deceived by the allegedly 'universal truths' handed down by tradition, and he was a staunch opponent of those philosophers who merely parroted Aristotle without understanding him.[17] In this respect, his attempt to study happiness without any prejudices resembles Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) (Keynes 2007, pp. 269-510) and Sir Francis Bacon's doctrine of the

16 The best study of the complex relationship between happiness and the 'public' spirit of the Enlightenment is Joeckel 2003: «A tension thus exists between Johnson as champion of Enlightenment universals and an alter-ego Johnson who shows, but perhaps does not fully realize, that happiness may lie beyond those universals» (p. 29).

17 Johnson thinks that their «souls are mere pipes or organs, which transmit sound, but do not understand them» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 4, p. 8). This is also the reason why Johnson deviated from the theory of happiness presented by James Harris (see Probyn 1978, pp. 256-266).

idols, described in his *Novum Organon* (1620) (Rees, Wakely, 2004).[18] In order to free the human intellect from the traditional «cobwebs of learning» (Johnston 1974, p. 28), Bacon had made a list of certain kinds of prejudices, or *idola*, responsible for the poor state of human knowledge concerning nature and science (Krohn 1987, pp. 93-107). Johnson follows suit and develops his own doctrine of 'eudaemonic idols'. He does what Browne and Bacon taught him to do: he studies an allegedly well-known example of human happiness and describes it in detail, trying to discern all its properties, only to refute it as a tragic deception in the end. He proves that all these phenomena of happiness are chimera rather than solid entities, instances of existential self-deception rather than evidence of the happy condition of the world.

5 Testing the Truth of Happiness: Johnson and the Essayistic Approach towards Felicity

Johnson is highly interested in «knowing himself»,[19] here following the advice of the Delphic oracle, but he understands how prone man is to self-deception (Bate, Strauss, vol. 3, p. 152). As Michel de Montaigne did two centuries before, Johnson too proves to be a clear representative of that 'observing self' that was becoming the hallmark of the essayistic approach towards life (Good 1988, pp. 26-42, 55-70). Even if the grave essays in Johnson's moral weeklies clearly deviate from the Frenchman's example in terms of style and procedure, he has quite a lot in common with Montaigne's Pyrrhonism. Montaigne was fully aware of the etymology of the term «essay», derived from the Latin word *exagium*, which means 'trial' or 'sample', and he used the 'new' genre in order to test everything (Freiburg 2006, pp. 148-172; on Montaigne, see Friedrich 1967). «*J'examine*» was his maxim, and he delved deep into the mysteries of everyday life. Nothing was too banal or trivial for him to analyse; in his studies of human nature he knew no taboos, and he likewise wrote about religion, death and sexuality. Montaigne was also interested in the process-related character of essay writing, revealing his ideas *in statu nascendi*, developing and changing them all the time while he was still trying to write them down. Taking nothing for granted, Montaigne was eager to develop new ideas, to specu-

18 Johnson's style is reminiscent of Browne's complex, Latinate prose; see Johnston, Mugglestone 2012, pp. 1-10.

19 Johnson observed and analysed himself so strictly that Mrs Thrale thought it almost pathological: «"Will anybody's mind," she once asked in desperation, "bear the eternal microscope that you place upon your own so?" And the more closely he probed into his own state of mind, the more hopeless the gulf between what he found there and what he demanded from himself» (Bate 1984, p. 377).

late, and to turn the subjunctive mode of writing into a habit. The major achievement of his essays, however, is to see the world from a completely new perspective, which allowed him to avoid all stereotypes and prejudices. Again, Johnson follows suit. It is true, his style could never compete with the Frenchman's vigour and elegance, and one also looks in vain for Montaigne's *esprit* and his airiness, which is superseded by wisdom and gravity in Johnson's case, but the complex syntax of Johnson's sentences makes it seem as if he wanted to test verities by grinding them in his own verbal mill.

Miss Beresford's opinion that in Johnson's prose «every sentence is an essay» (Chapman 1970, p. 1285) may be an overstatement, yet the aphoristic nature of his writing renders him extremely quotable. This is the reason why many of Johnson's ideas concerning happiness have attained the status of maxims and proverbs. Even if Boswell characterizes Johnson as a spontaneous thinker, the reader of the moral essays soon notices that there is a coherent system of thought underlying his ideas on happiness. The basis of his eudaemonism is a gloomy attitude toward life. Johnson firmly believes that the «condition of humanity admits no pure and unmingled happiness», and he is of the opinion «that something is always wanting to happiness» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 5, pp. 260-261). The beginning of *Idler* No. 89 seems to be the confession of a melancholy man, whose sad experience paves the way to theodicy:

> How evil came into the world; for what reason it is that life is overspread with such boundless varieties of misery; why the only thinking being of this globe is doomed to think merely to be wretched, and to pass his time from youth to age in fearing or in suffering calamities, is a question which philosophers have long asked, and which philosophy could never answer (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 275).

Happiness is not 'luck', and if it can be attained at all, it must be acquired through hard work. Johnson was well familiar with the traditional illustrations of the famous 'choice of life', the metaphor of 'Hercules at the Crossroads' and the 'Tablet of Cebes' (see Probyn 1978, p. 261). As these illustrations show, any easy approach to happiness is doomed to fail from the outset. Since pleasure is not happiness, it is precisely the hedonistic attitude towards life that prevents people from becoming happy.[20] In his allegory of Obidah, who leaves the steep road in order to amuse himself with fruits and visual entertainments on some «more commodious path» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, p. 345) but then recognizes that he is about to lose his way the moment darkness sets in, Johnson verifies that 'genuine' happiness must be related to labour, truth and rationality. All the gross,

20 See also *Adventurer* No. 39 (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 346).

and merely sensual pleasures in life are not appropriate ways to pursue happiness. They lead into the swamps of sloth and sin. Johnson would condemn nobody for loving food and wine, or for leading a 'natural' sexual life, but he would strictly censure all forms of orgiastic pleasure-seeking. In order to transcend the sphere of mere gross pleasure, one's entertainment must have both a sensual and an intellectual side. Johnson counts 'friendship' and 'conversation' among the most significant manifestations of happiness.[21] He knows that friends are a vital part of one's life, since without them all other pleasures start to lose their attraction because they cannot be shared; Johnson feels disappointed when he wants to talk with old friends in Lichfield only to find that they are dead or that they have felt neglected and no longer appreciate his presence. Johnson enjoyed it immensely to talk with friends. In conversations, ideas keep on flowing, witty repartees cause amusement, aphorisms and learned anecdotes promise the kind of intellectual joy Johnson was looking for. The dynamic metaphor of 'conversation' appropriately describes happiness, for which movement is indispensable. Being a mental phenomenon, happiness is part of the incessant 'chain of associations' that Johnson had learned from his study of Locke's philosophy (Martin 2008, pp. 1-9). A happy moment is exactly 'a moment', a brief interim between several calamities, and it becomes happy only because these calamities are known.[22] In Johnson's eudaemonism, change and contrast are affiliated and enable man to feel happy. The idea of terrestrial 'eternal happiness' is completely preposterous, since happiness would turn into torture if it were not predestined to cease at a certain time. The acceptance of the 'sense of an ending' is essential if one wants to understand Johnson's theory of happiness based on the principle *varietas delectat*.[23] Just as the seasons define themselves by being different from each other; just as night and day prove to be pleasurable because of the variation they bring; and just as leisure is so delicious after hours of hard work, happiness too can be perceived only if it is matched by misery and pain.[24] This idea, which harks back to ancient

21 See *Rambler* No. 99 and 108 (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 4, pp. 55-60).

22 See also *Adventurer* No. 120: «In some intervals of public prosperity, or, to use terms more proper, in some intermissions of calamity, a general diffusion of happiness may seem to overspread a people; all is triumph and exultation, jollity and plenty; there are no public fears and dangers, and 'no complainings in the streets.' But the condition of individuals is very little mended by this general calm; pain and malice and discontent still continue their havoc, the silent depredation goes incessantly forward, and the grave continues to be filled by the victims of sorrow» (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 467).

23 See Kermode 2000; see also *Rambler* No. 80 (Bate, Strauss 1969).

24 See also Johnson's definition of «idleness», which characterizes people «who have long since ceased to live, and at whose death the survivors can only say, that they have ceased to breathe» (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 96).

epistemology and turns up again in eighteenth-century doctrines of theodicy, permeates Johnson's moral writings. If he wants to attain happiness, man must follow the natural movement of the seasons, the motion of the earth through the universe, and of the planets around the sun.[25] Johnson leaves no doubt that happiness cannot be associated with indolence, idleness and paralysis; it must be a product of the active life of a person, no matter whether this person be an artisan, a farmer, an artist, or a scholar (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 455).

Happiness is incompatible with the idea that people are dead in the midst of life, a notion that was severely criticized by the Christian tradition as the vice of *acedia* (Freiburg 1998, p. 104). Existential paralysis is inacceptable, and therefore recurrent images of fluctuation (e.g. the 'river', the 'sea', the 'ocean') are extremely important to an understanding of what Johnson thinks about happiness; a static river, like a motionless mind, tends to become stale. But this does not mean that movement is a value *per se*. Johnson warns his readers against all forms of empty entertainment such as playing games or spending hours at the gambling table, or bubbles of activity that prove to be nothing but signs of procrastination.[26] He is against the habit of following all the follies of contemporary fashion,[27] only to stay in motion. And he makes it completely clear that no man will find his happiness just by travelling to a distant shore.[28]

The list of the preconditions for gaining terrestrial happiness is almost complete: one must not only be conscious of the importance of the present moment, of virtue, honesty, *varietas*, inter-activity, and movement; man must also be authentic if he wants to become happy. It is absurd «to counterfeit happiness»:

> The world, in its best state, is nothing more than a larger assembly of beings, combining to counterfeit happiness which they do not feel, employing ever art and contrivance to embellish life, and to hide their real condition from the eyes of one another (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 468).

In order to avoid this foolishness, hope and happiness must embrace a degree of rationality. In Johnson's eudaemonism, 'rational happiness' is

25 For the implications the position of the earth has for the theme of moralism, see Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, pp. 134-135.

26 See the description of idleness in *The Idler* (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, pp. 95-98), and the portrait of Sober in particular (pp. 97-98).

27 See *Rambler* No. 100, 208 (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 4, pp. 169-173; vol. 5, pp. 315-320).

28 Johnson criticizes Cowley for seeking happiness in retirement; happiness is not dependent on a place; see *Rambler* No. 6 (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, pp. 30-35).

strictly distinguished from merely 'imagined happiness'; like Bacon, Johnson despises all forms of imagination, one of the three significant elements of the ancient doctrine of the faculties (*memoria*, *ratio* and *imaginatio*). In Johnson's moral philosophy, imagination is tantamount to self-deception. It is the one psychic force that leads man astray and makes him follow the *ignes fatui*, the demonic false beacons that make one unhappy and miserable. Imaginative – i.e. irrational – hope and happiness are dangerous and must be avoided at all costs. Again and again, Johnson exposes the erroneous «airy gratifications» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 4, p. 106) that convey only fictitious happiness to a dreamer, or a lunatic, «whose fancy dances after meteors of happiness kindled by itself» (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 129). In one's private philosophical system, imagined happiness is a manifestation of hope; hope is a synonym of delusion; and delusion is a symptom of madness.

As an Enlightenment philosopher, Johnson is interested in destroying these 'cobwebs of the mind'; he sees his task in constantly reminding his readers of the existential limits which restrict any attempt to seek happiness; his admonitions, in other words, serve the «benefit of mankind» (Johnston 1974, p. 36); they are not to be misunderstood as peevish endeavors to spoil other people's enjoyment. Nobody is entitled to prevent another person's right to savour his happiness, and Johnson condemns not only envy but also all forms of disproportionate intervention into somebody else's life. In his *Rambler*, Johnson presents the incarnations of existential carpers, whom he derides as «human screech-owls» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, p. 314). Pertinax suffers from radical scepticism to such a degree that this intellectual malady makes him doubt everything, until he is about to lose his belief in God, which is the fastest way to misery, according to Johnson. Suspirus is one of the most negative characters in the *Rambler* because he cannot suffer any one to be happy and has made up his mind to spoil everybody's day by predicting future calamities, or by reminding someone of some long-forgotten pain.[29]

Actually, Johnson warns his readers not to surrender to the allures of another illusion: the idea that it would be possible to invent 'schemes of happiness'. Johnson insisted on the universal principle of the 'vicissitudes of life', the idea that the many changes and whims of fate can never be foreseen, so that it is impossible to plan one's life. He leaves no doubt that happiness is not subjected to the principles of reason alone and that although man may do something for his felicity he can never be sure of attaining it, because the rules of existence do not follow the paradigms of logic. For Johnson, the attempt to invent a scheme of happiness is tantamount to *superbia*, but also to *naïvité* and foolishness, as he shows in his oriental

29 See *Rambler* No. 95 and 59 (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 4, pp. 143-148; and vol. 3, pp. 314-318).

tale of Seged, who plans to be happy for ten days only to recognize that all his endeavours to become happy merely bring about misery in himself or in others:

> Such were the days which Seged of Ethiopia had appropriated to a short respiration from the fatigues of war and the cares of government. This narrative he has bequeathed to future generations, that no man hereafter may presume to say, «This day shall be a day of happiness» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 5, p. 305).

To a certain degree, Johnson may be looked upon as a follower of Boethius, who, in his *Consolatio Philosophiae* (ca. 523) tried to emphasize the soothing aspects of literature; Johnson's moral essays and in particular his *Rasselas* are outstanding examples of texts in which the desperate reader may find some solace, even if it is only because he feels that he is not alone in his suffering. One means of feeling happiness and also of mitigating one's suffering is comparison with other people's pain.[30]

In order to face the *terribilis visu formae* of life, Johnson reanimates a time-honoured trope: the 'shipwreck with spectator', a paradigmatic metaphor for all kinds of calamities and catastrophes (Blumenberg 1979). Observing a ship going down, while standing on a solid rock, paradoxically contributes to one's happiness. This happiness is not malevolent, although it corresponds to the existential joy of the survivor who compares his own situation with the misery of the victims. In fact, the spectator does not have to be physically present at the wreck but can rely on a kind of vicarious experience presented by books: poems, dramas, novels, and especially moral essays help the reader to have this experience and to guarantee that later on he will freshly appreciate his 'ordinary' state of existence as extraordinary, even happy. It is the contrast with the world of pain and suffering which turns the ordinary life of an average person into a state of felicity. Johnson's eudaemonism consciously encompasses the philosophy of suffering, in this way linking it to the theme of theodicy. To Johnson, the world was a *mélange* consisting of good and bad simultaneously: the former can only be appreciated after experiences of evil. Johnson staunchly believed, for instance, that physical suffering eventually led to moral good (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 278). The «armies of pain» do not distinguish between virtuous and vicious men, but affect everyone without exception (p. 469).[31]

30 It would be interesting to compare Johnson's attitudes with those described in Sontag 2003.

31 See also *Rasselas*: «But the angels of affliction spread their toils alike for the virtuous and the wicked, for the mighty and the mean» (Enright 1984b, pp. 120-121).

Johnson's ideas bear some resemblance to the concept of *Yin and Yang*: the interferences between the good and the bad have to be accepted as the natural law of eudaemonism: «But so full is the world of calamity, that every source of pleasure is polluted, and every retirement of tranquility disturbed» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 5, pp. 291-292). For many philosophers, especially the disciples of Lactantius and Epicure, this analysis suffices to question the existence of God (Freiburg 2004, pp. 225-227). Although Johnson's thinking about theodicy was very complex and clearly rejected any simple explanation of suffering, such as the clumsily optimistic arguments presented by Soame Jenyns, whom he despised (Freiburg 2004, pp. 225-243), he did not believe that the evidence of misery and pain could be used as an argument against the existence of a divine being. He would probably not have subscribed to Leibniz's ideas of pre-established harmony and of the best of all possible worlds, which the were ridiculed by Voltaire's bitter satire, *Candide* (1759), a book frequently compared to Johnson's *Rasselas* (Chapman 1970, p. 997).[32] Yet Johnson would have agreed that there is some 'reason' in suffering and that every calamity reveals a hidden meaning, an enigmatic message sent to the victim in order to remind him of the genuine values in life. In the dialogues with Boswell, the idea that «intellectual beings must be made perfect through suffering» is pronounced fairly often (p. 243). Indeed Johnson believed that terrestrial misery was intended by God to lead man to a 'happy' transcendental life beyond the grave. Johnson's essays follow Montaigne's definition of philosophy, that to philosophize means 'to learn to die' (see Starobinski 1986, pp. 109-140). In Johnson's moral universe it is Athanatus who enters the stage in order to teach the lessons of dying to the *Rambler's* audience (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, pp. 289-294). The deathbed of a close friend becomes a school of life, teaching the essential lessons of a 'happy' life, which is not compatible with the superficial existence most people lead. The deathbed shows the transcendental, *sub specie aeternitatis* perspective that Johnson tries to assume in his moral essays (Link 1957, p. 123). This perspective belittles the common notion of terrestrial happiness. It exposes the «folly of terrestrial hopes» (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 3, p. 290) and describes all ordinary ideas of happiness as «bubbles» that prevent morbid man from clearly perceiving the imminent «gulph of eternity» (p. 292). One's deathbed is the test of the authenticity of all notions of happiness.

32 See also the interesting comparison between *Rasselas* and *Candide* in Sir Walter Scott's *Lives of the Novelists* (1821), recently analysed by Watt 2013, pp. 33-34. See also Brinton 1972, pp. 92-96, and Joost 1957, pp. 166-173, who sees *Rasselas* as an «exercise in theodicy».

6 The Final Test: *Rasselas* and the Delusions of Happiness

Terrestrial life is viewed and judged *sub specie aeternitatis*;[33] this is also the reason why Johnson's oriental tale *Rasselas* reveals the potential of a genuine essay as a narrative test of eudaemonic principles. The brief philosophical novel tells the story of Rasselas, a young prince of Abyssinia, and his wise mentor Imlac, who, together with Nekayah and her maid Pekuah,[34] leave their home, the Happy Valley, in order to satisfy their curiosity and learn something about the 'real world'.

Even the beginning of Johnson's allegory of happiness is surprising: the story starts where others quite often end, with the description of an allegedly perfect place, the Happy Valley. The place is a kind of utopia reminiscent of Thomas More: «All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded» (Enright 1984b, p. 40). Anyone familiar with Johnson's philosophy will not be surprised that the Happy Valley is nothing but a euphemism for misery; by excluding evilness, the place violates the universal law of nature that good and evil have to be combined;[35] the exclusion of either of these elements makes the alleged utopia become a dystopian world. Johnson's vision of the Happy Valley can be characterized as an eighteenth-century anticipation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932): the absence of misery causes a certain stasis of life. The paralysis is universal, and Rasselas feels that «pleasure has ceased to please» (p. 44). Even the wise Imlac confesses that he «knows not one of all your attendants who does not lament the hour when he entered this retreat» (p. 68). The Valley's isolation, typical of utopian literature, has caused the idyllic place to stagnate and become stale; the principles of motion and change, substantial preconditions for genuine happiness, have been ruthlessly violated. Terrestrial 'eternal' happiness is doomed to fail. The Happy Valley quickly assumes the nightmarish qualities of existential boredom, which breeds a kind of *ennui*, eventually leading to the wish to end all earthly life. The absence of desire reveals the Happy Valley as the perverse *locus amoenus* of universal satisfaction: «Every desire was immediately granted» (p. 40). The reader is not surprised when he is told that Rasselas envies the animals around him (p. 43) and wants to leave the place: «I have already enjoyed too much; give me something to desire» (p. 45).

33 In this respect, Rasselas is reminiscent of the book Ecclesiastes; see Preston 1969, pp. 274-281.

34 Women are treated in the same way as men in *Rasselas*: «*Rasselas* presents serious, educated female characters who do not define themselves in relation to men» (Hansen 1985, p. 520).

35 See also Enright 1984a, p. 14, who compares the Happy Valley with the Garden of Eden and who sees Rasselas as «an Adam in search of a serpent».

The journey into the 'real' world is an experimental test of the ways to attain happiness.[36] Despite Imlac's warning that «[h]uman life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed» (p. 65), Rasselas and Nekayah are eager to learn about the reality outside the boundaries of the valley. Having been isolated from the real world so far, the noble pair reveals a certain degree of innocence and even *naïveté*, which is however necessary in order to put the recommended recipes of happiness to the test of experience. At the beginning, the prince is still optimistic: «I have here the world before me; I will review it at leisure: surely happiness is somewhere to be found» (p. 78).

The journey into the real world is an allegorical voyage through life; as in a gallery, different scenes of happiness are observed, described, analysed and eventually rescinded. All the theories of happiness are subjected to the test of experience, which is also a test of truth and morality (Müller 2012, pp. 113-129). It shows that the ways of reaching happiness, such as they are recommended to Rasselas, turn out to be idols, chimeras and illusions. Johnson, who knew the Stoic system quite well, makes Imlac warn Rasselas not to believe what people tell him: «"Be not too hasty", said Imlac, "to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but they live like men"» (Enright 1984b, p. 80). Johnson distrusted the ideal of *ataraxia* and of the detachment preached by Stoicism; at first Rasselas is fascinated by the happy prospects of leading an undisturbed life, but then he meets again the Stoic teacher, who has tragically lost his daughter and is on the verge of despair. The recipe for happiness, which in theory would be ideal, is useless in 'real life'. In his second example, happiness is personified by a mighty man, but, again, experience shows that he merely has «the appearance of happiness» and suffers under his enemy, the Bassa of Egypt (p. 84). The same procedure is applied to all the following 'schemes' for happiness: hedonism is obliterated; the philosophy of nature, reminiscent of Rousseau's doctrines, is vehemently refuted (pp. 87-88); the option of living happily in a hermitage convinces neither the prince nor his sister (pp. 84-85); the «happiness of high stations» is exposed as a fake (p. 90); the long analysis of marriage ends in the aphoristic recognition: «Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures» (p. 95). As the beginning of the tale had foreshadowed (p. 39), there is no chance of fulfilling plans to become happy in old age (pp. 93-94, 136-137). Imlac gives only one practical piece of advice: he confesses that he does not know how to lead a happy life but has at least some experience in coping with personal catastrophes:

> The state of a mind oppressed with a sudden calamity, said Imlac, is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new created earth, who, when

36 This does not mean that *Rasselas* lacks any historical reference; see Watt 2013, pp. 21-36.

> the first night came upon them, supposed that day never would return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they will be dispelled: yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease. But they who restrain themselves from receiving comfort, do as the savages would have done, had they put out their eyes when it was dark. Our minds, like our bodies, are in continual flux; something is hourly lost, and something acquired. To lose much at once is inconvenient to either, but while the vital powers remain uninjured, nature will find the means of reparation. Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye, and while we glide along the stream of time, whatever we leave behind us is always lessening, and that which we approach increasing in magnitude. Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion: commit yourself again to the current of the world (p. 115).

The catalogue of recipes is now almost complete: after Hedonism, Stoicism, the philosophy of nature, marriage, hermitage, old age, prosperity and power have been eliminated as practical means of attaining happiness, only knowledge seems to offer a certain prospect of felicity. However, although Imlac concedes that «we grow more happy as our minds take a wider range» (p. 65), knowledge is no final guarantee of happiness. As *The Rambler* confirms, Johnson is no clear opponent of 'curiosity': he has a very complex opinion on the *pros* and *cons* of this intellectual property, but he knows that curiosity, especially if combined with 'pedantry' (Freiburg 1990), may lead to disastrous results. In *Rasselas*, this perversion of curiosity and knowledge is illustrated by the figure of the astronomer who, although he must be admired for his knowledge of the universe and the stars, has fallen victim to the allure of pedantry. By concentrating exclusively on his object of studies, he has lost contact with reality and has glided into an idiosyncratic world of fantastic schemes. It soon becomes clear to the prince and his sister that the astronomer is on the verge of losing his mind, since he claims to be able to regulate the weather, and to have wind and rain at his command (Enright 1984b, p. 132). It is a sure sign of Johnson's deep humanity that he does not ridicule the astronomer. Being prone to fits of melancholy which border on madness himself, Johnson had great empathy for any kind of mental disturbance and reminded his audience that there is more than a vestige of madness in everyone:

> He who has nothing external that can divert him, must find pleasure in his own thoughts, and must conceive himself what he is not; for who is pleased with what he is? He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. The mind dances from scene to scene,

> unites all pleasures in all combinations, and riots in delights which nature and fortune, with all their bounty, cannot bestow (p. 133).

The astronomer is probably the only person in *Rasselas* who may have been happy for a certain while,[37] but his happiness is tantamount to madness. Equating happiness with madness is typical of Johnson's eudaemonism. Indeed, one might even say, it is the core of his theory of happiness. Johnson's criticism of the eudaemonic idols is so comprehensive that all recipes for happiness appear to be mere bubbles, illusions, 'airy gratifications', or manifestations of a cloud-cuckoo-land. None of them stands the test of truth and experience; the moment they are needed most, they vanish into nothingness. The vanity of human wishes for happiness is so absurd that «the wisest of men terminated all his experiments in search of happiness, by the mournful confession, that "all is vanity"» (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1963, p. 466). Prosperity, hedonism, Stoicism, power, solitude, marriage, fame, youth, philosophy of nature, even knowledge seem to be but manifestations of a kind of madness, an illusion helping man to avoid that kind of 'pit gazing' which writers such as Gustave Flaubert and Julian Barnes consider to be inevitable.[38]

Although Johnson frequently castigated Jonathan Swift's ideas, both writers see eye to eye as far as happiness is concerned. Like Swift, Johnson does not really believe in the possibility of terrestrial happiness; although he confesses to Boswell that he has no reason to lament the world,[39] his moral writings and his *Rasselas* reveal that he is deeply disappointed by his experiences. It would be easy to include Swift's famous definition of happiness in the collection of aphorisms presented in *Rasselas*; in his *Tale of a Tub* (1704), Swift's hack writes:

> For, if we take an Examination of what is generally understood by *Happiness*, as it has Respect, either to the Understanding or the Senses, we shall find all its Properties and Adjuncts will herd under this short Definition: That, *it is a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived* (Guthkelch, Smith 1958, pp. 171-172).

Johnson's eudaemonism discloses a paradoxical nature; in *Rasselas*, Nekayah describes the «state of life to such, that happiness itself is the cause

37 The only other exception is the «old man» who tries to be happy by leading a life according to the principles of nature (Lawlor 1966, pp. 243-270).

38 But unlike Flaubert and Barnes, Johnson continues to believe despite his experience of absurdity; see also O'Flaherty 1970, p. 205: «The paradox of *Rasselas* is that in it an absurdist view of human life is not seen as irreconcilable with the idea of a supervising Divinity».

39 «No, no, (said he,) it has been a very agreeable world to me» (Chapman 1970, p. 848; see also p. 1153).

of misery» (Enright 1984b, p. 117), and Johnson follows suit. By showing that happiness is impossible, by – more or less – defining happiness as a kind of madness, Johnson wants to convince his readers that it would be wise to live more consciously; it is precisely such a «sense of an ending» (Kermode 2000) – painful and immense though it may be – that presents a new attitude towards life. A fresh consciousness is necessary. It is the insight into the vanity of all earthly confidences and acquisitions, the recognition that all things will fade away and that terrestrial happiness is doomed to cease.[40] Like Imlac and the astronomer, Johnson, too, is «contented to be driven along the stream of life without directing their course to any particular port» (Enrigh 1984b, p. 150). In terrestrial life, there is no need to look out for a particular destination, but this is not true of the life beyond the grave. Johnson's choice of life is rather a recommendation for eternal life,[41] and his eudaemonism is of a transcendent kind.[42] In his *Rasselas* and in his moral weeklies, he does not tire of recommending that people strive for happiness with God, to lead a life that enables the individual to find that perfect felicity, of which he was deprived on earth (Bate, Strauss 1969, vol. 5, p. 295). When Goldsmith lamented the difficulty of finding happiness through writing, Johnson supported Goldsmith's view:

> Ah, Sir, that should make a man think of securing happiness in another world, which all who try sincerely for it may attain. In comparison of that, how little are all other things! The belief of immortality is impressed upon all men, and all men act under an impression of it, however they may talk, and though, perhaps, they may be scarcely sensible of it (Chapman 1970, p. 623).[43]

40 This shift of paradigms could be interpreted as a move from Aristotelian to Thomistic teleology (Pahl 2012, p. 221).

41 See also Cope 1986, p. 110: «Irregular virtue, sporadic philanthropy, and impulsive bursts of faith are thus converted into regular installment payments against moral obligations». Although one may be tempted to interpret Johnson's notion of happiness from an economic point of view, Johnson himself probably did not think that happiness beyond the grave could be 'bought' by acts of faith; he deeply believed in the grace of God.

42 This does not mean that Johnson may be described as a 'manager' who knows about the 'price' of eternal happiness; the claim that «Swift and Johnson coincide in the economic *mode* of their ethical thinking» (Cope 1987, p. 182) needs to be revised.

43 In his prayers Johnson often asked God for the grace of eternal happiness for himself and for others (for example, for Tetty); see Chapman 1970, p. 171. «Eternal happiness» played an important role for Johnson and Boswell: see Chapman 1970, pp. 243, 373, 471 (where the two speculate about the quality of transcendent happiness), 791, 966, 1191.

7 Conclusion: Happiness beyond the Grave

Johnson cherished extremely complex views of happiness: he loved to be happy in everyday life among his friends, but in the loneliness of his attic he returned to his melancholy and pessimism that enabled him to judge all phenomena of felicity from a distance. The rare manifestations of happiness in terrestrial life were closely linked to sensuality and intellectuality, thus differing from the 'gross pleasures' he so intensely despised. Happiness is a product of the mind, prone to change and liable to cease abruptly; since it cannot be fully grasped in the present it is projected into the future but often destroyed by the vicissitudes of life. Thus happiness is often tantamount to delusion, a eudaemonic idol inducing man to believe in airy gratifications that are doomed to collapse after a brief period of time. This final insight into the ephemeral character of terrestrial happiness lies behind Johnson's profound belief in a 'happy' world beyond the grave that every man must try to attain, by leading a virtuous life and by following the rules of that Divine Being to whom Johnson dedicated his earthly life.

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John Tillotson, Self-love and the Teleology of Happiness

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Abstract The idea of happiness in sermons in the long eighteenth century is examined, in particular the idea of moral reformation promoted by the Latitudinarian movement, which obtained relevant importance in the Church of England after the Restoration. The analysis focuses on Archbishop John Tillotson's Sermons as they exemplify the Church's position on Man's relationship with God and happiness. His sermons describe Man as a traveller whose destination is happiness. They underline the role of reason and conscience in promoting human obedience to divine law, while insisting on self-love and its force to move the individual to moral reformation. Tillotson clearly addresses the malleable nature of Man, the part that can be educated to religion and to the promotion of sincerity and charitable activities. Seeking for happiness therefore endorses the improvement in the mores of society and potentially helps Man to gain God's favour, which was considered lost after the Great Plague and the Great Fire of 1666.

> We shall reap the pleasure and satisfaction of it in our own minds, and all the other mighty advantages of it in the world, and the vast and unspeakable reward of it in the other (Tillotson, vol. 9, p. 3792; Sermon 158).

The question of happiness, where it can be found and how it can be obtained, became central in the literary output during the long eighteenth century. The year 1660 marked a watershed in the perception of pleasures and pastimes: the Caroline court brought French taste to England and, with it, the removal of Cromwellian austerity. Individual happiness became a central issue. In the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novel, the description of the search for happiness often highlights vulnerable human nature and its limits (Norton 2012, p. 15), but the portrayal of Man that can be drawn from it stems directly from a diversified background tension which included a wide publication of essays and sermons on the topic (Norton 2012, pp. 1-4). Sermons are fundamental to the analysis of the epistemology of happiness as they were the most widely read genre of the time, and attendance of church services served as a social cohesive force, especially among London's polite society, university communities, and also in fashionable resorts such as Bath (Sykes 1934, p. 256; Rivers 2005, p. 7). The delineation of two major currents within the Church of England in the second half of the seventeenth century, Calvinism and

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Arminianism, brought a scission in the idea of Man. Calvinists focused on human passivity and on the ultimate submission to grace and divine will for salvation. On the contrary, Arminianism fostered mankind's active role, considering works as essential proof of one's faith mediated by the support of divine grace (Rivers 2005, pp. 10-24). Thanks to its focus on religious morality as practice, Arminianism proved particularly influential from the 1660s onwards, whose development was encouraged by famous publications such as *Practice of Christian Duties*, better known as *The Whole Duty of Man*, published anonymously in 1658 and attributed to the Regius Professor of Divinity, Richard Allestree (1619-1681). Arminianism focused its attention on obedience and peace of mind, giving a central role to Paul's instruction to live «soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world» (*Titus* 2:11-12). Being a good Christian is at the heart of *The Whole Duty of Man*, whose author also stresses the pleasure and joy inherent in obedience to divine law, as «there is in the practice of Christian duties a great deal of present pleasure» (qtd in Rivers, 2005, p. 23). In obeying divine dictates, Man therefore accomplishes his self-fulfilment and experiences what being a Man truly is. Conversing in the seemingly opposed languages of reason and grace, faith and works, clergymen grappled with questions of morality and ethics, and their union with religion. The focus of discussion thus shifted to the subject perceiving happiness (Norton 2012, p. 3): clergymen claimed that the thirst after happiness is connatural to human nature and portrayed Man as a pilgrim who sets out on a journey in order to find happiness, though often losing his way (Tillotson 1743, vol. 8, pp. 3314, 3331; Sermon 132). In their journey, Men share «the common fate of travellers» and should «take things as we [they] find them» (vol. 1, p. 213; Sermon 8), forbearing adversities with patience and hope while doing all their best. The portrait of the happy Man that emerges from the eighteenth-century sermons is that of a person who knows himself and endeavours to obtain his greatest improvement in this life, and his salvation in the next. Prominence is given to the gratification that the individual can derive from a virtuous life: there is great pleasure in being innocent and virtuous because «that is to excel many others», and it is pleasant «to command our appetites and passions, and keep them in due order, within the bounds of reason and religion; because this is a kind of empire, this is to govern» (vol. 1, p. 299; Sermon 12).

This article examines late seventeenth-century issues concerning happiness as they emerge in the sermons of the Latitudinarian Archbishop John Tillotson (1630-1694), who is considered today as one of the most influential clergymen of the period. Tillotson synthezised and rewrote the ideas promoted by other seventeenth-century clergymen, such as William Chillingworth (1602-1644), Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683), John Wilkins (1614-1672) and Isaac Barrow (1630-1677), presenting them in more polished language, in a logical, rational structure suitable for polite audiences. Be-

ginning with a general introduction to Latitudinarian thought, my analysis proceeds to consider Tillotson's sermons on happiness and discuss divine goodness and human frailty, ending with an analysis of the role played by self-love and education, with their ultimate correspondence to happiness. Tillotson is representative of the position that the Church of England took in response to the process of transforming happiness into a psychological notion that had started with the circulation of René Descartes' works in the first half of the century (Norton 2012, p. 6). Tillotson shifts the cornerstone of the discussion on happiness to the individual's desire for happiness. In so doing, he equates it to obedience: he captivates the audience's attention while rationally engaging their self-interest, and fosters a mild self-denial while stressing God's goodness. His sermons exemplify how the Latitudinarians «reduced Christianity to a prudential, self-regarding moral code» (Sykes 2004, p. 149).

Considering the deep connection which late seventeenth-century clergymen perceived between moral reformation and happiness, Tillotson encouraged his audience to be educated towards virtue and happiness, with an appeal to their malleability through the means of reason and the spur of self-love. Though both Wilkins and Barrow examine, respectively, the power of self-interest and the nature of self-love, Tillotson's copious reference to those egocentric passions, coupled with his educational tone, show a turning point in the evolution of the modern concept of happiness: while asserting the individual right to happiness, Tillotson reminds his audience of the possibility of a moderate but delightful enjoyment of the world that ultimately correspond to the natural fulfilment of self-interest. Tillotson changes the question 'How can I be saved?' into 'How can I be saved and happy?'. The promise of a positive future prospect, together with the possibility of improvement in this life, led to the formulation of «a teleological conception of human nature» (Müller 2009, pp. 114, 137) which was grounded on the opportunities of redemption furnished by divine goodness, the freedom of Man's will, his love for himself and his interest in the afterlife (Rivers 2005, p. 77). Tillotson wrote:

> the consideration of a future happiness, and of those unspeakable and everlasting rewards which shall then be given to holiness and virtue, is certainly the most powerful motive and the most likely to prevail upon them [all temporal considerations] (Tillotson 1743, vol. 1, p. 122; Sermon 4).

Encouragement was coupled with insistent reference both to the easiness of obedience, «as all the acts of religion are reasonable and suitable to our nature» (vol. 1, p. 288; Sermon 12), and to the advantages derived from self-denial and daily examination. Though Man's final destination is after-life and eternal happiness, Tillotson pragmatically grounds the base

of the process in the present, earthly life. The collection of sermons he published in his lifetime opens with the assertion of religion's approbation of Man's desire for happiness and welfare, and ends with the praise of elevation, with the sermons on education that he had already published in 1694. All in all, the route to happiness appears as a well-defined path up a few simple steps.

The Latitudinarian movement, which after the Restoration constituted a small but active group within the Church of England, associated happiness with the reformation of manners and the consequent increase of morality (Rivers 2005, p. 73). Pulpits presented the 1688 Revolution as the product of God's infinite providence, a new – and perhaps last – chance to build up a moral reformation. «Thus hath the providence of GOD very visibly appeared in our late deliverance», Tillotson claims in a fast-sermon preached before the House of Commons in April 1690, and «there is no such way to engage the providence of GOD for us, as by real repentance and reformation; and by doing all we can» (Tillotson 1743, vol. 3, pp. 48-49; Sermon 36). The happiness of the individual depended upon the morality of the whole reign, and vice versa. As all human beings are endowed with the same rational faculties and the same desire for self-preservation, they act to improve their happiness, making cooperation among them therefore vital, fulfilling their natural desire for sociability and exercising their sympathy (Rivers 2005, p. 77):

> We have the same notions of right and wrong; we are all obnoxious to one another, and may be beneficial to one another; we all love ourselves and study the advancement of our interest and happiness (Tillotson 1709, p. 445).

The reasons for the promotion of a moral reformation resided not only in the deterioration of society's ethics but also in a reaction to both strict Puritan justification by faith and the danger of lax Antinomian morality. The election of Tillotson to the See of Canterbury in 1691 signalled the temporary triumph of Latitudinarianism and brought about a significant increase in the discussion of happiness. Politically speaking, the Latitudinarians supported tolerance and comprehension between Conformists and Non-conformists and the same breadth of vision could be retraced in their doctrine. In their search for a *via media*, they defended the combination of natural and revealed religion, asserting the fundamental role played by divine grace in assisting Man's sinful nature, though a certain preparation carried out by each single layman was needed (Spellman 1992, p. 97). Struggling to avoid Catholic excesses, they insisted on salvation coming only from God who alone can «make [mankind] perfect in every good word and work» (Tillotson 1743, vol. 5, p. 978; Sermon 63). Nevertheless, they also recognised and encouraged Man's active role in building society

and the pleasure derived from doing good, though without any merit or recompense from God.

The picture of Man that can be sketched from the sermons is that of an individual divided into two opposite natures: a stable, sinful, innate one, and a malleable one that is acquired through education and reinforced by habits and that can therefore be changed by proper Christian dictates (Müller 2009, p. 97). Indeed this latter side of Man, which is guided by reason, was addressed by the Latitudinarians in their homiletics. They expected Man to rationally choose to follow religion and its obligations (Müller 2009, p. 82), a clear reminder of Article X, *Of Free Will*. Bishop Gilbert Burnet, for instance, considered choosing upon reflection as 'liberty' (Burnet 1700, p. 117). Bishop Gilbert Burnet, for instance, maintained that choosing upon reflection is 'liberty' (Burnet 1700, p. 117). God Himself judges Men in afterlife according to the degree of consciousness with which they committed a crime: God «measures the faults of men by their wills [...]; for no man is guilty, but he that is conscious to himself that he would not do what he knew he ought to do, or would do what he knew he ought not to do» (Tillotson 1743, vol. 7, pp. 1882-1883; Sermon 114). Man is the only subject responsible for his own removal from his source of happiness. His virtue is under constant trial as part of divine providential education, and it is his personal duty to prove he is responsible for the maintenance and security of his moral standard: «The Christian religion is a great happiness to the world in general, though some are so unhappy as to be the worse for it; not because religion is bad, but because they are so» (p. 2011; Sermon 119). This aspect characterised the sermons of most of the Latitudinarians who acquainted Men with the possibility of moral improvement «through reasonable persuasiveness» (Tennant 2009, p. 104), which might be identified with Tillotson's rational appeal to self-love. Their sermons presented a uniformed conception of happiness: coupled with the practice of religion and with virtue as a goal, happiness was considered as the «Art of living Well and Happily» (see Müller 2009, p. 53), a principle that was applied to all Men alike, without any specific reference to individual desires. What John Locke said of human tastes, that «[a]ll pursues good, [but] the same thing is not good to every Man alike» (Nidditch 1975, p. 268) could not be applied to sermons, where subjective tastes give place to the 'recipe' given by God in the Scriptures to quench one's 'appetite' for happiness, i.e. «to Fear the Lord and Keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man» (*Ecclesiastes* 12, p. 13). Morality is thus grounded in active and internal obedience to divine law (Müller 2009, p. 61), and lies at the heart of the aesthetics of virtue (Porter 2000, p. 262). The Latitudinarians stressed the idea of the benefits deriving from a morally upright life (Scholtz 1988-89, pp. 182-207), as «the foundation of all divine knowledge is in the practice of religion» (Tillotson 1743, vol. 6, p. 1390; Sermon 87). Moreover, religion satisfies one's self-interest because it includes practical

advantages from which Man can profit if he applies its dictates seriously: «some virtues plainly tend to the preservation of our health, others to the improvement and security of our estates, all to the peace and quiet of our minds» (vol. 1, p. 156; Sermon 6). The Anglican's way of living – metaphorically moving upwards towards God, and trying to reach his utmost level of perfection – led to the formulation of a 'teleology of happiness'. As Tillotson claims, Man acts as «carried forth by an innate desire of happiness, to seek his felicity in God», because he is moved by a «spring of restless motion» which «forceth him out of himself, and tosses him to and fro, till he comes to rest in something that is self-sufficient» (vol. 8, p. 3522; Sermon 162).

Educated a Puritan, Tillotson soon embraced the Anglican confession, later becoming one of the leading preachers in London. The period from 1663 to 1688 provides evidence of his popularity with records of conspicuous attendance of the city's population to his Tuesday lectures at St. Lawrence Jewry and to his Sunday services at the Society of Lincoln's Inn, where his preaching attracted «crowds of the learned and polite» (Locke 1954, p. 22). After being appointed as one of King Charles II's chaplains, he also occupied other central pulpits in the city, including St. Paul and Whitehall. His prolific output of sermons was used in guides for students and young clergymen (Rivers 2004, p. 13) and the themes he developed in them influenced the clergy during the whole eighteenth century. Tillotson was particularly attentive to the composition and language of his sermons, whose «easy and natural style was so much admired by his contemporaries»: he preferred using non-refined language, with the purpose of making religion «an integral part of everyday life» (Simon 1967, pp. 282-283). He aimed at catching the public's attention not only with his appeal to reason and a polished language, but also with the development of topics which could attract them, such as the profitability of living a pious life. This was an issue that engaged their self-love and their individual and societal interest, while challenging their idea of happiness. He knew that the promotion of a valid moral reformation could only be carried out by moving people's hearts and feelings, and he was ready to reach a compromise (Locke 1954, p. 67). Together with John Wilkins, Tillotson was one of the first clergymen to promote the idea that, leading a virtuous life in this world, Man can obtain a blissful one in the next, assuming the theory of rewards and punishments as a moral demonstration which all rational creatures could use to judge their own fate (Shapiro 1983, pp. 88-89). It is in Man's interest to prefer a virtuous course as «religion hath so great an influence upon the felicity of men that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained, not only out of a just dread of the divine vengeance in another world, but out of regard to the temporal peace and prosperity of men» (Tillotson 1743, vol. 1, p. 105; Sermon 3). The profit derived from a good life is undeniable as it consists in the sought-after

peace of mind that is so dear to both ancient and modern philosophers alike: «Religion tends to the ease and pleasure, the peace and tranquillity of our minds; wherein happiness chiefly consists, and which all the wisdom and philosophy of the world did always aim at, as the utmost felicity of this life» (vol. 1, p. 112; Sermon 5). Though Tillotson does not mention specific enjoyments, he validates Man's right to happiness by claiming the possibility of indulging in those virtuous pleasures, as giving to the poor or having a peaceful conscience, which are natural in Man and therefore must be encouraged. To him, self-denial corresponds to self-fulfilment: in conforming to divine law, Man improves his situation and works to build his benefit in the after-life. With minimum effort he can gain happiness now and live happily ever after: «religion conduceth to the happiness of this life; and that both in respect to the inward and outward man. [...] It tends to the improvement of our understanding. It brings peace and pleasure to our minds» (vol. 1, p. 110; Sermon 4).

As in Isaac Barrow (Napier 1859, vol. 2, p. 56; Sermon 2),[1] Tillotson exploits discussions on happiness to sustain the theory of «dispositional innatism» (Spellman 1992, p. 82), which is defined as Men's shared capacity to be convinced of what is best for them. According to Barrow, innate ideas also include a «capacity for happiness», consisting in the «powers and faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying him the chief good» (Napier 1859, vol. 3, p. 147; Sermon 40). It is God who impressed the ability of distinguishing between right and wrong on the human mind, «so that no man can be ignorant of them, nor need to be mistaken about them» (vol. 6, p. 1432; Sermon 89). The evidence of this can be retraced in «the nature of a man's mind and understanding, which hath this notion of a deity born with it and stamped upon it» (vol. 1, p. 333; Sermon 1). Being conscious of his condition and dependency on God for happiness (vol. 8, p. 3574; Sermon 146), each individual can therefore form an idea of a perfect being by pondering what perfection implies (Spurr, 1988, p. 572-5 73). A detailed description of the attributes of God rationally demonstrates that «the nature of man, considered by itself, is plainly insufficient for it's [sic] own happiness» (Napier 1859, vol. 3, p. 142; Sermon 40). Tillotson claimed that no other creature or entity subject to illness and decay can meet divine prerequisites and make mankind happy, as «he made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us

1 «God our parent hath stamped on our nature some lineaments of himself, whereby we resemble him; he hath implanted in our souls some roots of piety towards him; into our frame he hath inserted some propensions to acknowledge him, and affect him; the which are exited and improved by observing the manifest footsteps of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, which occur in the works of nature and providence; to preserve and cherish these is very commendable; a man thereby keeping the precious relics of the divine image from utter defacement, retaining somewhat of his primitive worth and integrity; declaring that by ill usage he hath not quite shattered and spoiled his best faculties and inclinations».

from being so but our selves» (Tillotson 1742, vol. 3, p. 146; Sermon 40). God owns «wisdom to contrive our happiness, and power to effect it», as he knows «what is safest and best for them [men]' (vol. 3, pp. 143-144).

Tillotson thus insisted on the idea that Man's happiness lies in observing the law and in performing those actions which are required of him, showing obedience, sincerity and deliberation. He was extremely orthodox in his position, as he emphasized mankind's dependence on divine grace and focused on the idea that God's love and man's acknowledgement of one's best interest – i.e. self-love – should be the primary sources of action in life. The union of faith and a good life are central to «scripture and Christian morality» as «true faith is necessary in order to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief» (vol. 3, p. 217; Sermon 42). To Tillotson, the word 'moral' contains the idea of being «eternal and indispensable» (vol. 8, p. 3505; Sermon 141), especially when applied to obligations descending directly from God: «GOD hath planted in our nature the desire of our own preservation and 'happiness', and into this is the force of all laws, and the reason of all our duty is at last resolved» (vol. 5, p. 1022; Sermon 66). If the commandments prescribed by God were tailored to the human capacity for understanding and following them, they should not be a grievous weight imposed on mankind's shoulders: the Scriptures – and providential events – prove that the commandments are the manifest expression of either divine goodness or displeasure, and evidence of human perfectibility through moral education. Tillotson encouraged his audience to follow divine dictates because their wisdom coincide with Man's interest: religion encompasses the knowledge of God's law and the practice of it with «a suitable life», and leads to the conclusion that the «care of our selves and our own interest is the first part of wisdom» (vol. 1, pp. 7, 12; Sermon 1). While celebrating the providential rescue of the estates of Parliament from the conspiracy of the 5th November, Tillotson underlined how religion «consults not only the eternal salvation of mens [sic] souls, but their temporal peace and security, their comfort and happiness in this world» (vol. 1, pp. 437-438; Sermon 19). In line with the Latitudinarian teleology, Tillotson presents happiness as the obtainment of the inward peace of the soul; however, he does not forget to mention the satisfaction of lower, bodily desires which correspond to outward care:

> To be happy is not only to be freed from the pains and diseases of the body, but from anxiety and vexation of the spirit: not only to enjoy the pleasures of the sense, but peace of conscience, and tranquillity of mind. To be happy, is not only to be so for a little while, but as long as may be; and if it be possible, for ever (vol. 1, p. 12; Sermon 1).

In Tillotson's sermons therefore happiness and holiness coincide, as the

latter is «a state of peace and tranquillity, and the very frame and temper of happiness» (vol. 8, p. 3519; Sermon 142). Indeed, Tillotson affirms that «felicity doth naturally result from perfection» (vol. 8, p. 3320; Sermon 132), which can be retraced in the improvement of those qualities of «charity, and kindness, and compassion, which we peculiarly call humanity» that are founded on love, i.e. the very essence of the divine creator (vol. 8, p. 3312; Sermon 131). The practice of good actions was thus described as a way to move towards perfection, to emulate the infinite bounty of the Creator and to follow the example of Jesus Christ: to do good meant to «serve the temporal or spiritual good of our neighbour, and promote his present and his future happiness» (vol. 1, p. 412; Sermon 18). Time and again, Tillotson stated that education is one of the most efficient ways in which one man can be charitable to others: he can teach them the advantages of obeying divine law, and the danger from breaking it. In rescuing a strained and confused soul, the benefactor might build up a new Christian and thus enjoy the pleasure to see the result of his accomplishment.

The sermons that probably best exemplify the interrelation of obedience, knowledge of oneself, and happiness and pleasure from benevolence are the 'Six Sermons' on *Steadfastness and Resolution in Religion*, published in 1694. In addressing the young parents who are responsible for the moral and religious education of the future generations, Tillotson avers the importance of being a living example for children. Parents should daily show them how to recognize their actions with conscience and consideration, therefore perfecting their sincerity to God. Education works like a scientific experiment, in which observation and analysis of data are the first two steps to be considered. Parents should monitor the behaviour of their children in order to understand the level of proneness to evil that they have. Practically speaking, they should look after their children's well-being and happiness, providing examples of restraint and using fear to control treacherous inclinations. Reproof must be commensurate with the gravity of the sin, and cold reproofs should be used to encourage future virtue and to distance children from temptation. Parents should also provide models of conversation and politeness, and teach silence and self-control. They should acquire a right balance between knowledge and practice as well as between reason and passions, as these features are inseparable and complementary. The idea of education promoted by Tillotson is that of «training in Christian culture» (Spellman 1992, p. 61) in which Man's dependence on God and obedience to his law are paramount. In discussing temporal benefits promoted by a good Christian education, Tillotson affirms that even those temperaments that are next to desperate are «not utterly intractable to the grace of GOD and to the religious care of Parents» (Tillotson 1742, vol. 4, p. 502; Sermon 53). Morally speaking, children should be taught their duties towards God and Men. Tillotson often refers to 'government', namely self-control of various passions, in particular anger and desire, and

of one's tongue and sensual appetites. Governing one's appetites means learning sobriety, temperance, chastity and purity – these can be achieved also with the help of a moderate diet. Justice and honesty are also manly virtues that sons should learn from their fathers in order to be accepted and esteemed in society.

The most profitable way in which Man can be educated is through examples, which imply a profound knowledge of God's attributes, an attentive analysis of one's inclinations, and of the circumstances in which one lives. The highest example mankind might follow is that provided by Jesus Christ. By emulating him, Man satisfies his own nature, as Tillotson claims that «to do good is the most pleasant employment in the world. It is natural; and whatever is so is delightful» (vol. 1, p. 427). In the Scriptures, Man can find what he requires to raise himself to «the perfection of all virtue and goodness» (vol. 6, p. 1578; Sermon 98). Even though Man cannot fully understand what future happiness comprises, he perceives his role as active, because happiness «consists in our likeness to GOD, in a conformity to the moral perfections of the divine nature, which are exprest by the name of purity and holiness» (vol. 8, p. 332; Sermon 1320). Such a 'teleology of happiness' can therefore be considered as the means through which Tillotson encourages a moral reformation on a vast scale, which included regaining God's favour, quite evidently lost by the British population if one considered the punitive events that had happened in the mid-1660s. If true happiness corresponds to virtue which perfectly suites human nature and perfection (Müller 2009, p. 118), it can be obtained only through the awareness of one's frailty and the consequent desire for moral progress that the perception of defectiveness generates. Moreover, virtue can only be obtained through obedience to law and dominance of one's passions through self-education. Human lusts are eventually wilful acts, but they can be mortified by reflection and repentance, by keeping in mind that «every spark is dangerous, when it falls upon combustible matter» (vol. 7, p. 1945; Sermon 116). This virtuous process is based on the assumption that Man's moral responsibility is in choosing good over evil (Müller 2009, p. 161), as God created Man «a free creature, and capable of abusing his liberty, and intends this present life for a state of trial in order to another» (Tillotson 1742, vol. 8, p. 3432; Sermon 138). Nevertheless, the prescription of divine law mirrors God's goodness as He is a just, compassionate governor who does not charge the individual with anything but what his reason already tells him and to the improvement of his welfare, both temporal and eternal:

> So that taking all things into consideration, the interest of our bodies and souls, **of the present and the future, of this world and the other**, religion is the most reasonable and wise, the most comfortable and com-

> pendious course that any man can take in order to his own happiness (vol. 2, p. 286; Sermon 28; emphasis added by the Author).

Tillotson's teleology also implied that, while insisting on obedience, his sermons encouraged his audience to study the motives and circumstances of their actions in order to understand where their inclinations lay, to better check and control them. Thus he promoted the imperative *nosce te ipsum* in order to increase their happiness (Porter 2000, p. 261). Man would then realize that, at the core of his disposition to happiness, there is a strong belief in both God's providence and in self-love as the way in which the mind works, by cultivating one's interest with the aim of gaining eternal rewards. The individual therefore needs self-love to fulfil the ultimate wish and obtain salvation. Love is «an expression of the teleological dynamism that underlies human actions» (Pope 1991, p. 387), and Man uses it to judge his relationship with the material world. Thomas Aquinas affirmed that «to seek for one's own good and perfection is to love self» (*Summa Theologiae* I. 60. 3; see Pope 1991, p. 387). Precisely because self-love is a passion, there is nevertheless an ambiguous attitude toward self-love in sermons, a mixture of praise and refusal. Aquinas did not consider self-love either as a virtue or a vice, but advanced a distinction between 'ordinate' and 'inordinate' self-love. While inordinate self-love is often associated with sin and damnation, virtuous self-love is coupled with interest and with the happiness and pleasure deriving from upright behaviour. This compound is reflected in the discussion of charity and of the advantages that it brings both on Man and society.

The link between self-love, duty and happiness appears clear: by loving himself, Man fulfills his duty and promotes his obedience towards God, while the pleasant sensations derived from following the divine law generate pleasure and promote virtue. Self-love equates self-denial, as both consist in controlling one's passions and accepting sufferance and hardships for the sake of religion and a higher form of happiness:

> It [religion] directs men to their duty by the shortest and plainest precepts of a good life; it persuades men to the obedience of these precepts, by the promise of eternal happiness, and the threatenings of eternal misery in case of obstinate disobedience; it offers us the assistance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, to help our weakness (vol. 7, p. 2012; Sermon 119).

Even if it was considered a concession to sinful human nature (Spellman 1987, p. 410), the appeal to the audience's desire for happiness and to their interest, providing tangible proof of the benefits they might have derived from a virtuous life, became the driving force to move Man to the hoped for moral reformation. Even the Scriptures, Tillotson admitted, describe the pleasures of heavenly happiness using «the metaphors of a feast, and

a banquet, and a marriage' to suit 'our weakness and condescension to our capacities» (Tillotson 1742, vol. 1, p. 200; Sermon 8). Moreover, insistence on innocent pleasures, as for example the pleasure of giving, increase the effect of the rational claim to Man's self-interest. Mediating between extremes, Tillotson's sermons emphasize human sinfulness while highlighting the residue of the divine, *recta ratio*, as the yardstick that illuminates the darkness, 'the candle of the Lord.' It is through a conscious use of reason and understanding that human beings can «have any comfortable possession and enjoyment of [themselves] and of that which makes [them] men» (vol. 3, p. 141; Sermon 40).

The adjective 'moderate' took on a particular significance in sermons, as Tillotson was worried by the sinful and overwhelming power of objects, while at the same time celebrating the beauties of the world and advocating the possibility of enjoying it, as the wonders of nature could only be considered «to be of little other use but for the pleasure of man» (vol. 8, p. 3419; Sermon 137). The argument from design partly justified the appeal to an innocent savouring of the world, framed by the benefit of religiously living one's earthly life and obtaining God's favour and rewards in the next. Tillotson claims that God's goodness can be perceived not only by reason, but even by the senses, as «[God] hath subjected so great part of the creation to our dominion and use» (vol. 8, p. 3547; Sermon 164). The following exclamation, which was meant to captivate the audience, could but arouse feelings of comfort and confidence in the possibility of enjoying, albeit moderately, the beauties of the world:

> What an innumerable variety of creatures are there in this inferior world, which were either solely or principally made for the use and service, pleasure and delight of man! How many things are there, which serve for the necessity and support, the contentment and comfort of our lives! How many things for the refreshment and delight of our senses, and the exercise and employment of our understandings! (vol. 8, p. 3547)

Man asks himself not only how he can be saved, but how he can make the process of salvation the most pleasurable. If the world is rich and beautiful and Man was placed in it at the top of the Chain of Being, why could he not enjoy what God Himself in His infinite goodness had provided for him? Indeed, «the chief and principal end of many things is the use and service of man» (vol. 8, p. 3418; Sermon 137); only beings endowed with reason can enjoy the search into the secrets of the natural world:

> The goodness of GOD is the cause, and the continuance of our beings, the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our happiness; our greatest comfort, and our fairest example, the chief object of our love,

and praise, and admiration, the joy and rejoicing of our hearts (vol. 8, pp. 3523-3524; Sermon 143).

In the Christian-Stoic philosophy, happiness and virtue are connected to pleasure through the practice of self-reflection. According to Patrick Müller, Latitudinarians believed in conscience as an intellectual faculty whose judgements are based on the dictates of Natural Law. In functioning as a self-reflexive faculty to understand one's duty, conscience becomes «reason translated in moral terminology» (Müller 2009, pp. 173-175). This concept appears clear in the definition that Tillotson gave of conscience: it is «the great principle of moral actions, and our guide in matter of sin and duty [...], telling us what is the law of GOD and our duty» (vol. 3, p. 85; Sermon 38). Conscience gives Man the power to distinguish between good and evil: «the judgement of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions» (vol. 3, p. 86). Temporal delusion is still possible, but it has to be imputed to the weakness of Man's rational faculty, which at best is «very short and imperfect» (vol. 4, p. 834; Sermon 56). «The wisdom of men» (vol. 3, p. 144; Sermon 40) colours reality in such a negative way as to make Men distrust God's providence and the fair distribution of things in this world. Tillotson acknowledges the great difficulties there exits in convincing Men of where to place their expectations for happiness, as they mistakenly believe «the great joy of the men of this world is in a plentiful harvest, and the abundance of the good things of this life», and are unmindful of what can give them «more joy or gladness to [their] heart, the favour of GOD and the 'light of his countenance'» (vol. 3, p. 154; Sermon 40). Men live in constant fear of being deprived of what they can enjoy in this world (vol. 5, p. 1060; Sermon 68) and do not understand that pure bliss consists in being at ease, free from misery, especially from the trouble that their present condition generates. They are unable to judge things properly, as they place wrong expectations on almost everything that «promiseth happiness to [them] at a distance» (vol. 3, p. 139; Sermon 40), only then to realize that their hopes were vain. Men usually move away from their happiness because «an inordinate love of the world is very pernicious to [their] souls» (vol. 2, p. 431; Sermon 34). The consequent disadvantages are the increase of material, daily cares, the temptation of forgetting one's religious duty and dependence on God, and falling prey to falsehood.

According to Tillotson, Christians have all the instruments to know themselves: the mind is able to remember past events and think of its future prospects, even eternity. Although human knowledge is often limited, because men «are satisfied of many things, the manner whereof [they] do not know» (vol. 8, p. 3370; Sermon 135), they can use their mind to know themselves: men are familiar to themselves and cannot be «strange and wonderful to [them]selves» (vol. 8, p. 3418; Sermon 137). Both «the glori-

ous faculty of reason and understanding» and conscience might contribute to the process of «reassuming humanity» (Spellman 1992, p. 68):

> If we consider the mind of man yet nearer, how many arguments of divinity are there in it! That there should be at once in our understandings distinct comprehensions of such variety of objects; that it should pass in it's [sic] thoughts from heaven to earth in a moment, and retain the memory of things past, and take a prospect of the future, and look forward as far as eternity! [...] The great miracle of the world is the mind of man, and the contrivance of it an eminent instance of GOD's wisdom (Tillotson 1742, vol. 8, p. 3417; Sermon 137).

Human minds should be raised above two passions: «the fondness of life, and the slavish fears of death» (vol. 5, p. 1074; Sermon 69). Apart from God, there is «no other reasonable, no nor tolerable hypothesis and scheme of things for a wise man to rely upon, and to live and die by» (vol. 3, p. 155; Sermon 40). It is providence that directs Men's lives, and «does bid more fairly for the comfort and happiness of mankind» (vol. 3, p. 156). These are indeed the points on which Tillotson insists in his sermons: the idea that emerges is that, in order to become a faithful and joyful Christian, one should combine what is required of him in natural religion with faith in God's providence and distribution of rewards and punishments:

> For instance, the belief of an invisible GOD, of a secret power and providence, that orders and governs all things, that can bless or blast us, and all our designs and undertakings, **according as we demean our selves** towards him, and **endeavour to improve** our selves to him (vol. 5, p. 982; Sermon 54; emphasis added by the Author).

Moreover, sermons warned against other limits imposed on knowledge, which are caused by «inference from the will (whether faculty or function) through interests, passions and appetites» (Griffin 1992, p. 67). Man's will varies according to the circumstances of an action; the motives that lead one to commit a crime can therefore be investigated only by Man's conscience. If the will limits the process of learning one's duties, it cannot reach the heart of Man and influence human behaviour: «Now, if there were a real contradiction in the rule, it were impossible it should be put in practice; but it is only a contradiction in our *wills*, which must thus be reconciled to the *rule*» (Tillotson 1709, p. 441).

While asserting the degeneracy of human nature, Tillotson also claimed that mortification is «not so difficult work to most persons, if they begin it betimes» (Tillotson 1742, vol. 7, pp. 1939-1940; Sermon 116). The consciousness of either one's corruption or of the possibility of improvement was eventually thought to lead members of English society to change their lives

and sincerely repent for past sins. Tillotson admitted that he perceived «a just sense of the frailty of human nature»; at the same time he also appreciated «the human resolution; but withal, a most firm persuasion of the goodness of GOD» (vol. 4, p. 838; Sermon 56). Education is a commendable way to contrast the pretences of the will because Man can become the virtuous product of the Christian environment in which he grows up.

> By the happiness of a good education, and the merciful providence of GOD, a great part of many mens [sic] virtue consists in their ignorance of vice, and their being kept out of the way of great and dangerous temptations; rather in the good customs they have been bred up to, than in the deliberate choice of their wills; and rather in the happy preventions of evil, than in their resolute constancy in that which is good (vol. 1, p. 380; Sermon 16).

The benefit from acting virtuously is represented by both earthly happiness and eternal rewards. The precepts in divine law all tend to Man's advantage; what is required of Man is obedience and sincerity of heart. Tillotson encourages the audience to reason on this 'mild obligation'' informing them of the importance of their inner disposition: «we must always be prepared in the resolution of our minds to deny ourselves, and to take up the cross, though we are not actually put upon this trial» (vol. 5, pp. 1045-1046; Sermon 67). At the end of his Sermon 67, Tillotson draws an interesting parallel between loving oneself and denying one's material desires and concludes that they coincide: «this which we call self-denial, is, in truth and reality, but a more commendable sort of self-love, because we do herein most effectually consult, and secure, and advance our own happiness» (vol. 5, p. 1047). Only through this union of self-love and denial can Man obtain true happiness, which is «something that is nearer and more intimate to us, than any of the things in this world; it is within thee, in thine heart, and in the very inward frame and disposition of thy mind» (vol. 8, p. 3331; Sermon 132). Based on the highest possible knowledge of oneself under the guidance of conscience, on a constant observation of one's actions, and on rational self-reflection, the 'teleology' mediates the possibility of improvement through the formulation of good habits with the blissful help of divine grace, as «[…] this life is the time of our preparation for our future state. Our souls will continue for ever what we make them in this world» (vol. 1, p. 208; Sermon 8). Man cannot believe that he can obtain happiness without sincerely trying to live a holy life, as the span of time allotted to him in this world is the only one he has to prepare himself and dispose his soul for the next. Thus, «to be happy, is to enjoy what we desire, and to live with those whom we love» (vol. 1, p. 209; Sermon 8). Distancing himself from his subjective and imperfect judgment of the world, man reaches utmost perfection of his knowledge and 'the height of

love' once he trespasses the threshold of heaven (vol. 1, p. 201).

Tillotson's sermons demonstrate how morality is therefore unavoidably linked to self-interest, «spurred on by the powerful incentives of eternal reward and punishment« (Scholtz 1988, p. 204). This implies Man's active participation, while perfection, as defined by divine law, is mitigated by a sincere obedience to it according to one's capacity, as the covenant of grace or leniency claims. Both the doctrine of work – the moral active role of individuals in reforming society – and the incitement to self-love are moved by 'the self-seeking motives of human action' and exemplify a consistent pace towards the investigation of human nature in the Restoration Church of England. Addressing the issue of happiness and self-love encouraged the growth of a powerful Protestant merchant middle-class whose major value in business dealings was prudence, «the calm faculty by which one evaluates his actions in terms of their consequences for himself« (Sams 1943, p. 322). Prudence corresponds to Tillotson's self-love that makes Man believe in future judgement, urging on him its justifiable necessity, because there is nothing «so desirable to one that must live for ever, as to be happy for ever« (Tillotson 1742, vol. 5, p. 1235; Sermon 78). The need to avoid eternal punishment is coupled with the physical and mental pleasure that the good Christian feels once he has entered a truly religious course. Religion gives constancy to Man's life; it improves human resolution and frees from guilt and worries. Pleasure therefore can be had «within the limits of virtue« (vol. 2, p. 293; Sermon 28), by avoiding extreme excess as can be found for example in covetous and voluptuous people.

Tillotson ultimately arrives at the conclusion that «the temporal felicity of man, and the ends of government can very hardly, if at all, be attained without religion» (vol. 2, pp. 250-251; Sermon 27). What Man achieves is a certain degree of «true pleasure and perfect freedom» when controls his passions and uses reason. The whole process contributes to human satisfaction and to «the pleasure of wisdom and discretion» (vol. 2, p. 282), whilst the fickleness of sensual pleasures generates disappointment. Furthermore, religion improves human health, «the life of life»:

> It is not indeed so violent and transporting a pleasure, but it is pure, and even, and lasting, and hath no guilt or regret, no sorrow and trouble in it, or after it: which is a worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawful pleasures, and makes them to be bitterness in the end (vol. 2, p. 284).

In Tillotson's predication, moderate self-love therefore acquired a new ethical light, becoming the 'ennobled self-interest' that could guide London's polite and mercantile classes to moral reformation, and encouraged them to strive for perfection by 'word', i.e. by their sincerity of heart, and by 'hand', i.e. by performing good actions with honesty, energy and obedience.

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The Spectator, Aesthetic Experience and the Modern Idea of Happiness

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Abstract Focusing on Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Spectator* papers, this essay links modern ideas of happiness to the emergence of aesthetic theory in early eighteenth-century Britain. It argues that Addison and his contemporaries understood aesthetics foremost as a means of enriching life through sharpening our sensory experience of the world, especially the world of nature. The «happiness» that attends this experience, as they describe it, is a heightened sense of feeling alive, of connecting to the providential order, and being part of a common universe of existing things.

1 Introduction

Central to modern conceptions of happiness is the belief that life is richest and most worth living in moments of intense perceptual awareness. Perhaps no one has espoused this idea more eloquently than the Victorian essayist and art critic Walter Pater. The task of «speculative culture», he insists, is «to startle» the «human spirit» «into sharp and eager observation» (Pater 1974, p. 70). Indeed, Pater characterizes this as the key struggle of life itself. «A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life», he proposes, going on to ask:

> How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

It is as if in the very act of attention there is a concentration of life, a distillation. The world itself grows more vibrant. Pater writes lyrically of «gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch», famously positing that «to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life» (Pater 1974, pp. 60-61). Life radiates in such moments; it burns. A good life, according to this distinctly modern view, is one in which we are most perceptually alive.

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The present essay traces this idea back to its origins, which coincide with the origins of modern aesthetics in early eighteenth-century Britain. This is perhaps not surprising. Etymologically, *aesthetics* comes from the Greek *aesthesis*, meaning sensation or sensory perception.[1] And from the beginning, aesthetics was identified with a particular form of 'pleasure' or 'satisfaction'. But the connections between modern aesthetics and modern happiness are in fact much deeper than this, and are woven into the very way we talk about happiness. Whereas classical *eudaimonia* refers to the objective quality of a life as a whole, and is perhaps best decided by a third party, modern happiness is a first-person, typically present-tense feeling or affect – as Darrin McMahon explains, it is «something we can savor, relish, and feel» (McMahon 2006, p. 181).[2] These are perceptual terms, borrowed especially from the language of taste, which of course provides the foundational metaphor of aesthetic theory from Addison to Kant (on «taste», see Gigante 2005). We have grown so accustomed to thinking about happiness in this way that we may no longer recognize it as metaphorical, and indeed it may no longer be metaphorical. In moments of happiness, we really do feel happy; there are times when we really do seem to savor life. Aesthetic-perceptual tropes lurk even in historical accounts of how this idea came into being. In his compendious *Happiness: A History*, McMahon charts the slow emergence of modern happiness over the course of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, characterizing it as a «great reorientation of the human gaze – from the joys of heaven to the happiness of earth» (McMahon 2006, p. 190). While McMahon is ostensibly describing the rise of a secular idea of temporal felicity, his language denotes a happiness that attends the way we «gaze» upon the «earth». This essay seeks to unpack that happiness.

I will focus on Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's enormously successful *Spectator* papers. Of particular relevance to scholars of aesthetics is Addison's celebrated «Pleasures of the Imagination» series, appearing in June and July 1712 as numbers 411-421 of *The Spectator*. Along with Shaftesbury's *The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody* and Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, the «Pleasures of the Imagination» series is widely regarded to be one of the founding texts of modern aesthetic theory (cfr. Costelloe 2013; Guyer 2008; Stolnitz 1961). For the purposes of this essay, I will be concerned less with Addison's originality than with his exemplarity, analysing the «Imagination» papers – as well as his, and Richard Steele's, related essays throughout *The Spectator* – to make larger claims about the period's aesthetic philosophy. I will

1 Of course, the term 'aesthetics' did not enter modern languages until later in the century through the work of Alexander Baumgarten. For a concise overview, see Costelloe 2013, pp. 1-5.

2 For the third-person quality of *eudaimonia*, see Soni 2010 and Potkay 2010.

also draw on the work of a number of eighteenth-century nature poets, who can be seen as extending and disseminating this particular way of looking at nature. My central argument is that early aesthetic theory is less an academic study of the principles of art than it is a kind of art of living, one that pursues affective well-being through intensifying and enlivening our experiences of the world. In developing these ideas and practices, aesthetic writers pioneered modes of experience that continue to inform the way we think about happiness.

2 Aesthetics beyond Art

In recent decades, a wide range of philosophers and theorists – including Jacques Rancière, Arnold Berleant, Richard Shusterman, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Yuriko Saito, and Alexander Nehamas – have challenged the art-centred nature of contemporary aesthetic theory and its sequestering of aesthetic experience from the concerns and projects of everyday life. Although we may have lost sight of the fact, early aesthetic theory was not constrained in this way. This is the case even with the «Imagination» essays, the most technical and focused treatment of the subject to be found in *The Spectator*. In the inaugural number, *Spectator* 411, Addison introduces his topic and offers what is now recognized to be a paradigmatic account of aesthetic experience. I quote the passage in full:

> A Man of Polite Imagination, is let into a great many Pleasures that the Vulgar are not capable of receiving. He can converse with a Picture, and find an agreeable Companion in a Statue. He meets with a secret Refreshment in a Description, and often feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in the Possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated Parts of Nature administer to his Pleasures: So that he looks upon the World, as it were, in another Light, and discovers in it a Multitude of Charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of Mankind (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 538).

As this passage indicates, Addison understands aesthetics to encompass more than just the newly grouped fine arts (see Kivy 2012). In addition to pictures, statues and descriptions, aesthetics is also a matter of how one «looks upon the World», including such things as fields, meadows, and even the «rude uncultivated Parts of Nature». Like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, Addison holds a broad and inclusive view of the aesthetic; as he proposes in an earlier essay, the «Whole Universe» is an arena of aesthetic experience, «a kind of Theatre filled with Objects that either raise in us Pleasure, Amusement or Admiration» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 453).

In its earliest formulation, aesthetic theory attended to a special way of experiencing the world, one that included but was in no way limited to official artworks.

What defines the aesthetic, as Addison is describing it here, is not the status of the object, or even its perceptual properties, but the particular way the subject regards or contemplates that object. As Addison puts it, the aesthetic spectator «looks upon the World, as it were, in another Light». While this passage has become a *locus classicus* of modern aesthetic theory, it is worth noting that Addison's partner, Richard Steele, had formulated a very similar idea in a *Tatler* essay published almost three years earlier, proposing that a certain «Frame of Mind raises that sweet Enthusiasm which warms the Imagination at the Sight of every Work of Nature, and turns all around you into Picture and Landskip» (Bond 1987, vol. 2, pp. 59-60).[3] For Steele, too, aesthetic experience depends, at least in part, on how we look at things, the particular 'Frame of Mind' we bring to bear on the world. Analytic philosophers refer to this perspective as the «aesthetic attitude», a concept closely identified with Jerome Stolnitz, who defends the extreme position that «no object is admitted to or excluded from the realm of the aesthetic because of its inherent nature», concluding that «[i]t is the attitude of the percipient that is decisive» (Stolnitz 1961, p. 142). Addison and Steele do indeed suggest that the aesthetic field is potentially unlimited, Steele claiming that this 'Frame of Mind' shapes one's vision all around you, and Addison that this special 'Light' colors every thing one sees. But this does not mean that the objects themselves are «indifferent», as Kant would later suggest (Kant 1987, p. 46).[4] The kind of attentiveness Addison and Steele are describing does not supply value to valueless things – it 'discovers' value where it might otherwise remain hidden.

Closely bound up with the concept of the aesthetic attitude is the principle of disinterestedness. According to this line of thinking, what distinguishes aesthetic vision from other modes of looking is the fact that aesthetic vision is devoid of any practical or instrumental interest in the object, the spectator admiring it for its own sake alone. In eighteenth-century British aesthetic theory, this idea is often formulated in terms of property ownership. By seeing the world as «in another Light», Addison explains, the spectator may feel «a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in the Possession». A similar passage can be found in Shaftesbury's *The Moralists*, where, contemplating a «delicious» tract of country, Shaftesbury juxtaposes the «enjoyment of the

3 For more on eighteenth-century practices of viewing the world as if it were art, see Marshall 2005. As the present essay demonstrates, this is not the only way to experience the world aesthetically. For more on this distinction, see Norton 2015.

4 For a critique of the Kantian view, see Shusterman 1992, p. 52, and Leddy 2012, p. 28.

prospect» with the «property or possession of the land» (Shaftesbury 1999, p. 319). An even earlier – and more vigorous – expression of this idea can be found in the writings of the theologian and philosopher John Norris, who is perhaps best remembered for his early critique of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and for his published correspondence with Mary Astell. One of the poems included in Norris's *A Collection of Miscellanies*, archly titled «My Estate», reads:

> Nay (what you'd think less likely to be true)
> I can enjoy what's yours much more than you.
> Your meadow's beauty I survey,
> Which you prise only for its hay
> […]
> What to you care, does to me pleasure bring,
> You own the cage, I in it sit and sing (Norris 1717, p. 58).

Even more pointedly than Shaftesbury and Addison, Norris maintains that there is more «pleasure» to be found in admiring a «meadow's beauty» than in owning the actual land. While we sometimes think of disinterestedness as a cool, almost indifferent detachment, this is not at all what we encounter in these passages. In developing what we have come to identify as the quintessentially modern aesthetic attitude, these thinkers expressly sought to articulate and promote a richer and more satisfying mode of being in the world.

To fully grasp these points, it is necessary to look beyond the «Imagination» papers to Addison and Steele's discussions of aesthetics in the wider *Spectator*. Especially illuminating here are Addison's «Chearfulness» essays, published on three consecutive Saturdays in May 1712 (the month preceding the «Imagination» papers). Although it may have fallen out of intellectual favour, cheerfulness was a vaunted character trait in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a key term in the moral lexicons of writers from Addison and Steele to Austen, Wordsworth, and Dickens. According to David Hume, it «naturally conciliates the good-will of mankind» and no quality «more readily communicates itself to all around» (Hume 1966, p. 86). Addison analyses cheerfulness from a variety of angles, «with regard to our selves, to those we Converse with, and to the great Author of our Being», examining it in both its «moral» and «natural» dimensions (Bond 1965, vol. 3, pp. 430 and 451). Cheerfulness is not happiness itself, as Addison depicts it, but a dispositional outlook or attitude conducive to happiness. He counsels his reader to cultivate this «Habit of the Mind», an undertaking especially urgent for his «Countrymen», who, he acknowledges, have a notorious penchant for «Melancholy»:

> Every one ought to fence against the Temper of his Climate or Constitution, and frequently to indulge in himself those Considerations which may give him a Serenity of Mind, and enable him to bear up chearfully

> against those little Evils and Misfortunes which are common to Humane Nature, and which by a right Improvement of them will produce a Satiety of Joy, and an uninterrupted Happiness (Bond 1965, vol. 3, pp. 453-454).

In this passage we find Addison unmistakably musing on the good life, its nature and its challenges, and he is doing so in a way that is largely consistent with classical ethics. One must cultivate the «Habits» necessary to withstand life's inevitable «Evils», thereby preserving the «Serenity of Mind» needed to keep working toward the venerable goal of «Happiness», or *eudaimonia*.[5] What is striking about Addison's formulation is the crucial role aesthetics plays in the project.

After considering cheerfulness as a «Moral Habit» in *Spectator* 381, Addison devotes the next two essays in the series to demonstrating how aesthetic experience itself can promote cheerfulness. *Spectator* 387 posits that the world is «filled with innumerable Objects that are proper to raise and keep alive this happy Temper of Mind»; it goes on to survey a wide range of natural phenomena to illustrate the point, including «Lakes» and «Rivers», the «Musick» of the «Woods», the color «Green», the «Vicissitude of Day and Night», the «Change of Seasons», and even such «grotesque Parts of Nature» as «Rocks and Desarts» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 452). *Spectator* 393 focuses on «Spring», the season when the earth's «Beauty and Delightfulness» are at their freshest and «the Mind of the Beholder» is especially apt to experience «those secret Overflowings of Gladness» upon «surveying the gay Scenes of Nature». The affective resources of nature appear to be endless. «The Creation is a perpetual Feast to the Mind» that can appreciate it, Addison maintains, «every thing he sees chears and delights him» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, pp. 474-475).[6]

Particularly fascinating to Addison is the gratuitousness of all this beauty, or, more precisely, the lucky fit between our senses and the material world. For Addison, as for Hume later, beauty is not a «real» or objective quality in things themselves: it is a perception of the mind, not a property of objects. Technically speaking, things in themselves are colorless, drab and mute, something Addison reflects on both here in the «Chearfulness» essays and in the «Imagination» papers. Drawing on Locke's distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of objects, Addison suggests that it is largely the latter that please us aesthetically, speculating that «if

5 Potkay 2010 makes a strong argument for the perseverance of *eudaimonism* in the eighteenth century; Norton 2012 argues that the subjective nature of modern happiness strained the *eudaimonistic* framework of traditional theories of the good life; see also Soni 2010, who sees a sharper break between modern happiness and classical *eudaimonia*.

6 «Addison envisions an infinitely renewable dynamic of pleasure between a man and his world» (Lubey 2008, p. 415).

Matter had appeared to us endowed only with those real Qualities which it actually possesses, it would have made but a very joyless and uncomfortable Figure». That things appear the way they do is a function of our perceptual systems, which bolsters Addison's conviction that the world was in fact made for our aesthetic pleasure: «and why has Providence given [matter] a Power of producing in us such imaginary Qualities, as Tastes and Colours, Sounds and Smells, Heat and Cold, but that Man [...] might have his Mind cheared and delighted with agreeable Sensations?» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 453). In a very material sense, there is no beauty without a spectator. And perception itself, as Addison understands it, is a ruse of providence to enrich the affective life of the perceiver.

Of course, we must meet the world halfway. If it is true that beauty promotes «Chearfulness», Addison insists just as strongly that the full appreciation of beauty requires «Chearfulness». This is, after all, the idea behind the claim that we need to view the world as «in another Light» if we are to discover its hidden «Charms». But the «Chearfulness» essays can help us flesh out our understanding of how this works. The aesthetic attitude, as Addison depicts it here, involves more than an attentiveness to the mere look of things, a focus on such formal properties as line, proportion and color. As the concept of «Chearfulness» makes clear, there is an affective component to the aesthetic attitude, a way of feeling toward the world, a kind of joyful openness toward it.[7] The individual «possessed of this excellent Frame of Mind», Addison writes, «comes with a Relish to all those Goods which Nature has provided for him» and «tastes all the Pleasures of the Creation which are poured about him» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 430).

From this point of view, the primary function of aesthetics is to enlarge our capacity to enjoy the world. With the right 'Frame of Mind' the individual can find profound satisfaction even in life's ordinary things and experiences, what Wordsworth will call the «simple produce of the common day» (in the Preface to *The Excursion*, l. 55; see Halmi 2014, p. 445). This is precisely where Addison and Steele look for it. According to Steele, «The Air, the Season, a Sun-shine Day, or a fair Prospect, are Instances of Happiness»; the spectator requires nothing «extraordinary to administer Delight» (Bond 1965, vol. 2, p. 309). Addison concludes his «Chearfulness» essays on a similar note, declaring that this «habitual Disposition of Mind consecrates every Field and Wood, turns an ordinary Walk into a morning or evening Sacrifice» and consolidates «those transient Gleams of Joy» into «an inviolable and perpetual State of Bliss and Happiness» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 476). The aesthetic thus does not transcend the everyday so much as

7 Something like this can be found in *Tintern Abbey*, where Wordsworth speaks of «Our cheerful faith that all which we behold | Is full of blessings» (Schmidt 2006, p. 113).

it reveals its immanent value. As we have seen, this transfiguration of the commonplace (which scholars tend to identify with Wordsworth) was a key component of early aesthetic theory and perhaps its chief aspiration. From it derives our modern belief that we can enrich life by simply attending to the ordinary beauty around us.

3 Aesthetic Experience and the Ontology of Happiness

Addison and his contemporaries refer to the affects that accompany aesthetic experience by a variety of names, including «Pleasure», «Refreshment», «Entertainment», «Amusement», «Enjoyment», «Delight», «Chear», «Gladness», «Satisfaction», «Joy», «Bliss», and «Happiness». The wide range of terms signifies a correspondingly wide range of feelings, from light «Pleasure» or «Refreshment» to profound «Bliss» or «Happiness». They are not all synonymous or interchangeable and may differ from each other as much in quality as in intensity. I have no interest in reducing this multiplicity to a single theoretical model. But, at the risk of generalizing, I do want to reflect on the sense of good feeling – indeed, the sense of well-being – that accompanies more profound aesthetic experiences of nature. What follows is necessarily speculative; I offer it as an invitation to further inquiry.

Let me begin by returning to Addison's «Chearfulness» essay on the powers of «Spring». After claiming that no season compares with spring «for Beauty and Delightfulness», Addison attempts to explain the effects of this beauty:

> In the opening of the Spring, when all Nature begins to recover her self, the same animal Pleasure which makes the Birds sing, and the whole brute Creation rejoice, rises very sensibly in the Heart of Man. I know none of the Poets who have observed so well as *Milton* those secret Overflowings of Gladness which diffuse themselves thro' the Mind of the Beholder upon surveying the gay Scenes of Nature (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 474).

According to Addison, «Man» here feels a form of «Pleasure» that is also felt by other animals. For the latter, this appears to occur spontaneously, with the «opening of the Spring, when all Nature begins to recover her self». For humans, by contrast, this enjoyment is mediated by aesthetics, triggered by the very act of «surveying» the natural world. Aesthetic contemplation, in other words, is what enables humans to feel the «same animal Pleasure» enjoyed by the rest of «Creation». This has important implications for the ways we think about both aesthetics and happiness.

That the good life is thought to have anything at all to do with «animal Pleasure» is historically significant. Indeed, it points to another important distinction between modern happiness and classical ideas of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle, for example, takes it for granted that the good life for humans must be distinctively human. The highest good, he maintains, cannot be mere «living» (which is «apparently shared with plants»), nor can it be a «life of sense-perception» (which is «apparently shared» with horses, oxen and «every animal»; Aristotle 1985, p. 16). It is on these grounds that Aristotle rejects «pleasure» as a candidate for *eudaimonia*, dismissing it as a «life for grazing animals» (Aristotle 1985, p. 7). Addison and his contemporaries not only have a more sanguine view of «pleasure» than Aristotle, they also have a more favorable view of animal enjoyment. This is especially evident in eighteenth-century nature poetry. The Scottish-born James Thomson, writing shortly after Addison, envisages «The whole mixed animal creation round / Alive and happy» (Sambrook 1984, p. 99), and the evangelical poet William Cowper, to cite a slightly later example, commends the «happiness» of animals, insisting that all creatures, even «the meanest things that are», have the right «to live and to enjoy that life» (Cowper 1785, p. 116). In contrast to Aristotle, who presupposes that animals are incapable of happiness, Thomson and Cowper see animal happiness not only as possible but in some ways as exemplary. Animals are able to find happiness in life itself: they are «alive and happy», they «live» and «enjoy that life». Even before Wordsworth, animal happiness exemplified the elemental joy of being alive, the felicity of sheer existence.[8]

Of course, it is not so easy for humans to hold onto this joy, a theme Addison and Steele return to again and again in their essays. In *Spectator* 93, Addison writes evocatively of how we «hurry» through life without really savoring it: we «travel through Time as through a Country filled with many wild and empty Wastes», he declares, wagering that «If we divide the Life of most Men into twenty Parts, we shall find that at least nineteen of them are meer Gaps and Chasms» (Bond 1965, vol. 1, p. 395). Steele picks up this theme in *Spectator* 100, published just over a week later. Employing language that anticipates Virginia Woolf's «cotton wool» of «non-being», Steele asserts that most of our lives are spent in «Instances of Inexistence» (Bond 1965, vol. 1, p. 421).[9] An individual «advanced in Years» who looks back on life, Steele proposes, and «calls that only Life which was passed with Satisfaction and Enjoyment», «will find himself very young, if not in his Infancy» (Bond 1965, vol. 1, p. 419). Addison avows that even «Religion», if it is without «Chearfulness», deadens all the pleasures of

8 For more on the 'joy of being', see Potkay 2006, pp. 121-138.

9 Virginia Woolf says: «Every day includes much more non-being than being» (Schulkind 1985, p. 70).

existence: it «extinguishes all Joy and Gladness, darkens the Face of Nature, and destroys the Relish of Being it self» (Bond 1965, vol. 4, p. 253).

It is against this backdrop that Addison and Steele recommend aesthetics, offering it as a kind of therapeutic. In the first of his «Imagination» papers, Addison argues that «Delightful Scenes [...] not only serve to clear and brighten the Imagination, but are able to disperse Grief and Melancholy, and to set the Animal Spirits in pleasing and agreeable Motions» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, p. 539). In the «Chearfulness» essays, he proposes that aesthetic contemplation stirs the «same animal Pleasure» that makes the «whole brute Creation rejoice» and stimulates our «Relish [for] all those Goods which Nature has provided». It may even restore the «Relish of Being it self». This is Steele's preferred way of thinking about aesthetic experience, which he casts in strikingly existential terms. In the same essay in which he diagnoses our chronic «Inexistence», Steele urges us to «Preserve a Disposition in our selves to receive a certain Delight in all we hear and see» (Bond 1965, vol. 1, p. 421). By becoming more responsive to our perceptual world, he suggests, we can intensify the feeling of living, enhancing the «Satisfactions of [our] Being» (Bond 1965, vol. 1, p. 420). With this «Disposition» to «receive a certain Delight in all we hear and see», we can live «in such a Manner, that there are no Moments lost» and the «heaviest of Loads (when it is a Load) that of Time, is never felt by us» (Bond 1965, vol. 1, p. 420). It is important to observe that Shaftesbury holds a similar view, claiming that without the experience of beauty, «the world would be but a dull circumstance, and life a sorry pastime. Scarce could we be said to live» (Klein 1999, p. 352). The earliest aesthetic theorists, like John Dewey more than two centuries later, explicitly argue that aesthetic experience makes us feel more «fully alive» (Dewey 2005, p. 17).

While in recent years literary scholars have become increasingly interested in questions of perceptual and affective experience, our understanding of this issue has not moved significantly beyond the ideas of Dewey and Pater.[10] For further insight, we might look to current developments in aesthetic theory, particularly to those theorists who have begun to reexamine aesthetic experiences outside of art.[11] I am thinking especially of Gumbrecht, who equates 'aesthetic experience' with 'moments of intensity', framing the latter in terms of a kind of 'presence' in the world (cfr. Gumbrecht 2004). Yet even Gumbrecht's ontology leans too heavily toward the subject to do justice to the objective or cosmological dimensions of early aesthetic theory. By so radically downgrading the object of aesthet-

10 For an influential collection of this work on affect, see Gregg and Seigworth 2010.

11 For everyday aesthetics, see Saito 2007 and Leddy 2012; for the aesthetics of engagement, see Berleant 1991 and 1997; for an updated pragmatist aesthetics, see Shusterman 1992; and for related approaches, see Gumbrecht 2004, 2006.

ics, thinkers from Kant to Stolnitz have made it difficult for us to recover this aspect of eighteenth-century aesthetic experience. As we will see, for all his notable subjectivism, Addison ultimately understood aesthetics to be a way of connecting with the larger order of things.

The first point I would like to make in developing this idea is that the spectator's pleasure in beholding nature is in some complex way a condition of nature itself – not just other animals, but «all Nature», including inanimate beings. Throughout the «Chearfulness» essays, Addison speaks of the «gay Scenes of Nature», Nature's «Smiles», and the «Chearfulness in our Fields» (Bond 1965, vol. 3, pp. 474-475), a practice he associates with Milton and *Psalms*, and which would go on to form a key trope of subsequent nature poetry. Thomson, for example, surveys the «glad creation», and Cowper ponders «Scenes of accomplished bliss». The idea finds perhaps its definitive statement in Wordsworth's memorable line: «in all things / I saw one life, and felt that it was joy» (Maxwell 1986, p. 94). To dismiss this as pathetic fallacy is to underestimate the complexity of the ideas involved, much as Heather Keenleyside (2009) has argued of personification in *The Seasons*. Through a masterful reading of the poem, she explores how Thomson's canny use of the figure destabilizes the boundary not only between humans and animals but between persons and things. While the main thrust of her essay works to collapse the notional distance between the human and the nonhuman, Keenleyside also considers the matter in practical (or experiential) terms, attending to the ways humans and nonhumans move and are moved by each other. This is particularly useful for thinking about early aesthetic experience and its attendant affects.

Crucial to the aesthetic pleasure Addison describes, as we have seen, is that it is the 'same' pleasure animating the larger world of nature. Thomson makes this point even more directly, perhaps with Addison in mind, when he ruminates on the «infusive force of Spring on man», asking: «Can he forebear to join the general smile / Of Nature?» (Sambrook 1984, p. 26). Glossing this passage, Keenleyside notes that «Thomson imagines proper or social love not as an internal feeling but rather as an external force, which binds 'this complex stupendous Scheme of Things'» (Keenleyside 2009, p. 464). I would argue that this kind of affective logic is at work in Thomson's and Addison's understanding of nature aesthetics in general: to experience happiness in aesthetically contemplating nature is to «join» in the happiness of nature, to no longer stand apart. The feeling of connectedness is integral to the feeling itself, and a central part of its power and appeal.

For early aesthetic theorists and contemporary nature poets, there could be a decidedly numinous or sacred quality to such experience.[12] As noted

12 According to a number of critics and philosophers, this is one of the key forms of transcendence to survive the so-called disenchantment of the world. «In a secular society art, like natural beauty, remains a last refuge for religious and noumenal truth and it retains something

earlier, Addison attributes the very possibility of aesthetic enjoyment to providence, for organizing our senses in such a way that we take pleasure in perceiving the natural world. He also puts forward a kind of aesthetic version of the argument from design, claiming that «Faith and Devotion naturally grow in the Mind of every reasonable Man, who sees the Impressions of Divine Power and Wisdom in every Object on which he casts his Eye» (Bond 1965, vol. 4, p. 144). Addison develops his ideas about the divinity within nature more fully in his «Essays upon Infinitude» (*Spectators* 565, 571, 580, 590), writing in *Spectator* 565 that the «Maker» is in fact «Omnipresent» in «his Works»: «His Being passes through, actuates, and supports the whole Frame of Nature» (Bond 1965, vol. 4, p. 531). Shaftesbury apostrophizes the «Sole animating and inspiring power» of Nature on similar grounds: «Thy influence is universal, and in all things thou art inmost» (Klein 1999, p. 307). This picture of a spirit-infused world would become a staple of the period's nature poetry. Thomson (sounding again like Addison) writes of the «boundless spirit» that «pervades, / Adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole» (Sambrook 1984, p. 26). Cowper maintains «that there lives and works / A soul in all things, and that soul is God» (1785, p. 107); and Wordsworth, in the same passage of *The Prelude* quoted above, explains how «with bliss ineffable / I felt the sentiment of Being spread / O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still» (Maxwell 1986, p. 94). Such ideas were widespread in the period, appealing to deists, Latitudinarians, and evangelicals, deriving from an eclectic body of intellectual sources, such as Stoic and Platonist cosmologies, the *Psalms*, Spinoza, Henry More, and even Isaac Newton.[13]

What is interesting about Addison's take on this is the way the individual again appears to hover on the margins of the universal system. Consider this passage from *Spectator* 571, one of the «Infinitude» essays, which I quote at some length:

> Every particle of Matter is actuated by this Almighty Being which passes through it. The Heavens and the Earth, the Stars and Planets, move and gravitate by Vertue of this great Principle within them. All the dead Parts of Nature are invigorated by the Presence of their Creator, and made capable of exerting their respective Qualities. The several Instincts, in the brute Creation, do likewise operate and work towards the several Ends which are agreeable to them, by this Divine Energy. Man, who does not co-operate with this holy Spirit, and is

of this power even for the secularly and atheistically minded and not merely for those who remain religiously inclined» (Diffey 1996, p. 57).

13 Addison writes: «But the noblest and most exalted way of considering this infinite Space is that of *Sir Isaac Newton*, who calls it the *Sensorium* of the Godhead» (Bond 1965, vol. 4, p. 532).

> unattentive to his Presence, receives none of those Advantages from it, which are perfective of his Nature, and necessary to his Well-being (Bond 1965, vol. 4, p. 548).

This «Divine Energy» is present everywhere in the «Creation», animating all the actions and forces of the universe, from the circling of planets to the commands of instinct; even the «dead Parts of Nature» are sustained and «invigorated» by this «great Principle». And yet, as with the «animal Pleasure» of spring – and perhaps with «Being» itself – what is inexorable in the rest of nature is not so certain with us. Of all creatures, «Man» alone is capable of standing outside the general system of providence, receiving «none of those Advantages» that are «perfective of his Nature, and necessary to his Well-being».

Seen from this perspective, aesthetic experience serves to draw us back into the cosmic order, allowing us to «co-operate» with the will of providence. Indeed, early aesthetic theorists held it to be one of the primary ways we fulfill our part of the divine plan. Henry Grove neatly captures this idea in the final *Spectator* paper, number 635, which can be read as a summation of the series as a whole: «the End for which [God] designed his reasonable Offspring is the Contemplation of his Works, the Enjoyment of himself, and in both to be happy» (Bond 1965, vol. 5, p. 170). Grove contends that humans were made to enjoy the world's beauty, not only in the sense that our «Faculties» are providentially fitted to the world, but also in the sense that this defines our very purpose or «End». Reprising Addison's famous metaphor, Grove submits that God fashioned this «immense Theatre» for our «Entertainment», speculating further that «he is well pleased in the Satisfaction» we derive from it (Bond 1965, vol. 5, pp. 170-171). Here we see the teleological underpinnings to the period's belief that aesthetics can profoundly enrich life. Not only does aesthetic experience make us feel more alive and more connected to what is outside of us: it may be our very reason for being. As Grove puts it – and Addison and Shaftesbury would certainly agree – we are «designed» to find our happiness in contemplating God's works. It is what we have been put here to do.

4 Conclusion

As scholars, we have paid too little attention to the role aesthetics may have played in the Enlightenment's legitimization of earthly happiness, the «great reorientation of the human gaze» described by McMahon (2006). Aesthetic theorists like Addison were on the leading edge of the new cultural understanding of happiness. At a moment when religious traditionalists continued to oppose the growing focus on temporal felicity, and even

its supporters fretted over the links between subjective well-being and the objective good or virtue,[14] Addison's aesthetic writings show a remarkable lack of defensiveness on this score: not only do they take it for granted that humans are supposed to be happy, they clearly identify that happiness with affective pleasure or enjoyment, with feeling good. Roger Scruton observes that the «experience of natural beauty [...] contains a reassurance that this world is a right and fitting place to be – a home in which our human powers and prospects find confirmation» (Scruton 2011, p. 55). I submit that something like this took place on a cultural level: the fascination with natural beauty that defines the rise of aesthetics was inextricably bound up with the period's developing conviction that this is a «right and fitting place to be», that happiness need not wait until the next world. To recognize the earth's beauty is to recognize it as our proper «home».[15]

Of course, there are also important ways in which aesthetic ideas of the good life have long stood in tension with mainstream conceptions of happiness. I am thinking in particular of the view of happiness as a kind of pursuit, an unending cycle of desire-possession-desire that psychologists refer to as the «hedonic treadmill» (see Bok 2010, pp. 145-147). The disinterestedness of aesthetic experience seeks to suspend or interrupt that dialectic; it is a way of enjoying the meadow without owning the land.[16] This is not a happiness of wanting and acquiring, but of experiencing and being, of what Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes as «the simple feeling of existence» (Rousseau 2004, p. 88).[17] A recurring theme in early aesthetic theory, as we have seen, is that we already have what we need to be happy – the trick is to appreciate it.

Addison and Steele ultimately understand aesthetics to be a means of enriching life through sharpening our sensory experience of the world. The happiness that attends this experience, as they describe it, is a heightened sense of aliveness, of connecting to the cosmic order, and of being part of a common universe of existing things. What we find here, as with Rousseau later in the century, is an affective affirmation of being itself. After the art-centered and anesthetic tendencies of so much twentieth-century aesthetics, this kind of thinking has in fact made a resurgence

14 For more on the period's anxieties about the moral implications of subjective happiness, see Norton 2012, 2014.

15 For changing aesthetic appreciations of nature, see Nicolson 1959.

16 «Aesthetic joy is, as joy always is, desire at rest» (Potkay 2007, p. 140).

17 Jacques Rancière summarizes this «happiness» as follows: «to enjoy the quality of sensible experience that one reaches when one stops calculating, wanting and waiting». While Rancière calls Rousseau «the first theoretician of this disinterested sensible state» (Rancière 2013, pp. 45-47), Addison and his contemporaries precede him by half a century.

in contemporary aesthetic theory.[18] Gumbrecht, for example, proposes that aesthetic experience «may help us recuperate the spatial and bodily dimension of our existence», and perhaps give us back «a feeling of our being-in-the-world» (2004, p. 116). Elaine Scarry maintains that beauty «quickens» and «adrenalizes»: «It makes life more vivid, animated, living, worth living» (Scarry 1999, pp. 24-25). And Arnold Berleant contends that the value of the aesthetic should be measured «by perceptual immediacy and intensity in enhancing the intimate bond of person and place» (Berleant 1997, p. 36). Theorists are beginning to reflect again on the enhancive powers of aesthetic experience, its capacity to enliven being and contribute to a full and happy life. Although *The Spectator* is rarely acknowledged as a precedent, they are carrying on the original project of modern aesthetic theory.

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18 Of course, present day theories shed the language of divine presence and providence. Elaine Scarry, however, suggests that this does not fundamentally change the experience itself: «What happens when there is no immortal realm behind the beautiful person or thing is just what happens when there is an immortal realm behind the beautiful person or thing: the perceiver is led to a more capacious regard for the world» (Scarry 1999, pp. 47-48).

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Happy Face or Happy Space?
Expansions of Happiness in Eighteenth-century Expository Verse

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Abstract Between the now nearly archaic meaning of 'happiness' as fit, functional, or favourable and its modern meaning as a generalized mental state stands the Enlightenment, with its investigations not only of the nature of happiness but also of its pursuit and maintenance of happiness. This article analyses the expanding meaning and practice of happiness in the verse of the 'long' eighteenth century. The paper begins with what might be called the 'eruptive' approach to happiness in which assemblies of offbeat objects such as gemstones or of startling events such as those at the battle of Blenheim sum up to a more general idea of happiness. This amalgamative approach to happiness emphasizes not only the process but the spatiality of happiness: its emergence as an epiphenomenal *je ne sais quoi* and its tendency to expand beyond its origins. This essay explores the resulting eighteenth-century association between happiness and space through a probe of poets, such as James Thomson and Mark Akenside, who specialize in the description of vast panoramas. It uncovers the textures of spatial happiness through a look at sublime poets such as Thomas Warton and Christopher Smart, who link their vivid notions of happiness with visionary ideas of space, orientation, and bearing. The article concludes with an homage to astronomer William Herschel and other happy enthusiasts for vast distances.

Introduction

«I have no name / I am but two days old. – / What shall I call thee? / I happy am», reports the unexpectedly loquacious babe-in-arms who headlines later eighteenth-century poet William Blake's short lyric, *Infant Joy* (Stevenson 2014, p. 60). The youngest in the cadre of under-age and under-informed speakers who populate Blake's verse suite, *Songs of Innocence*, Blake's forty-eight-hour-old commentator explores those not altogether innocent assumptions by which we not altogether innocently stumble through life. *Infant Joy* features two strangely disembodied voices: a rather mature infant who androgynously identifies himself or herself as 'happy' and another disembodied voice who responds with an intention to «sing the while» as «sweet joy befall[s]» the newborn. One voice is as particular as one set of swaddling clothes; the other voice reverberates indeterminately across the full range of human experience.

Despite his somewhat disingenuous suggestion that he sings about innocence, Blake's stereophonic vocalizing of joy cannily recapitulates the

long cultural history of happiness. In the same way that Blake's song conjugates within one poem both a babbling baby and an omniscient narrator, 'happiness' in the post-Enlightenment world mixes abstraction with individuality. The word denotes a generalized, somewhat indefinite but presumably pleasurable state of mind that seems equally accessible to everyone but that always manifests itself concretely, variously, and experientially in particular individuals. Phrases such as 'the happy life' or 'a happy society' that suggest an intermediate level of abstraction – that describe a condition affecting a large but not unlimited number of people and that reference communal achievements such as good public health or a happily functioning metropolitan sewer system – have faded into occasional or only artful use. It is common enough to say that particular persons such as 'Fred' or 'Agatha' are 'happy' and then, conversely, to posit that their personal happiness is the same good feeling that, universally, everyone feels now and then, but to declare that 'Sweden is a happy land owing to the high quality of its sanitation systems' would be unusual, even eccentric in our times. 'Happy' and 'happiness' today refer in a polarized fashion to the presumptively generalized mental states of particular persons. In and before Blake's time, however, 'happiness' covered a wider range of particularity and abstracton. Idiomatic speech included such options as 'the happiness of mankind is… [to do *X*, *Y*, or *Z*]' or 'it is a great happiness, to enjoy royal favor' or 'the happiness of Pope's style is… [*P*, *Q*, or *R*]' or 'the archer enjoyed the happiness of a stronger-than-expected bow'. Thomas Jefferson's and John Locke's memorable but murky references to 'the pursuit of happiness' seem less puzzling when readers remember that, throughout the Enlightenment, happiness was something of an all-purpose epiphenomenon. Happiness could be an attribute of a thing; an attribute of a society or similar group; a generalized condition; an object of abstract speculation; or just about anything in-between these alternatives.

Happiness, whether accessed through tangible objects or understood as a 'pursuit' or other process or relegated to an inventory of abstracted mental states, was only one of several possible ultimate goods considered by the long eighteenth century. Competing with happiness for primacy of purpose were salvation; prosperity; health; fame; renown; wealth; and 'place', whether understood as a lofty position at court or as localization in an amenable, soothing landscape. Happiness could emerge from, be correlated with, or jar against any of these candidate achievements. Earning, or at least receiving, divine grace and salvation might or might not have involved living a happy life. The story of secularization that runs through the eighteenth century is also the story of the colonization of these other top-level goods by happiness: of an intensifying expectation that any possible good either triggers happiness or is recognized as good owing to the happiness accruing to its possessor. This essay will examine a selection of verse compositions that epitomize this nervous relation between particular

experiences and the happiness with which they are associated. This, by way of opening a window on the long process by which happiness became both increasingly abstract and preeminent among human goals: by which happiness diverged from particular happy things and by which it metamorphosed into not only a general state of mind but also into an indicator of right, merit, and other, sometimes curious forms of success.

1

As is known to anyone who has read an eighteenth-century novel and has thereby witnessed a hero or heroine arriving at a state of hard-earned felicity following multitudinous chapters full of vacillating fortunes, happiness is at its best when positioned at the *end*. To understand the revision of happiness during the long eighteenth century, it is helpful to open our study at the end of the period, if only to see what had survived of the older, more particular and substantive version of happiness. At the very far end of the Enlightenment and also down at its lower stylistic reaches, John Scafe, a member of a very small fraternity of mineralogical poets, produced a whimsically abbreviated epic, much in the vein of John Philips's *The Splendid Shilling*, in which the heroic tropes and conventions that ennoble Homer's and Virgil's sagas are deployed to describe an assembly of personified gems and stones gathered at the titular *King Coal's Levee* (Scafe 1819).[1] All but free of plot, Scafe's versified panorama reviews all the minerals, precious or otherwise, marching them one-by-one before their bituminous monarch while describing their properties, merits, behaviors, and occasional interactions. Among those in the queue is the omnipresent Sandstone, who might be described as England's one-man building block.

> Next came the elder SANDSTONE, jolly fellow!
> In good society was ever mellow:
> Which spread – as oft it will in such a case –
> A rubicund diffusion o'er is face.
> He was a staid old toper; one who sat
> Firm on his chair, though blind as any bat (ll. 223–228).

On the brink of the age of caricature that gave us the all the amusing figures in Charles Dickens's novels, Scafe delivers, in the person of Sandstone, a standard jolly old English fellow who happens to be composed of crumbling crystals. Sandstone himself, like the happiness he enjoys, is an extended inventory: a list of specific properties, from rubicund complexion to suitability

1 Subsequent quotations are cited by line number.

for standing with stability in piles. The comic effect of Scafe's poem emerges in part from the ease with which something like stone can legitimately be declared happy as measured by Enlightenment-era standard operating procedures: by tallying up specific properties or attributes or behaviors until, at some point, they sum to happiness. More generally, Scafe reveals the happiness of the mineral kingdom by assembling a vast number of happy rocks, celebrating several dozen minerals one-by-one until the whole seems happy.

Scafe's whimsical review of the crystalline kingdom might seem an odd place to open the pursuit of happiness. Scafe's bagatelle might seem an even less likely place to commence a probe into a poem about, of all things, the Battle of Blenheim, the Duke of Marlborough's complicated, partly heroic and partly lucky attempt to diminish France by securing Austria against Francophilic Bavarians. Yet the War of the Spanish Succession, in which the Battle of Blenheim was the English highlight, provided an unlikely, peace-loving, feckless poet such as John Philips, who is remembered today primarily for his ingenious mock-heroic poem *The Splendid Shilling*, with an occasion to demonstrate not only that he could write seriously, straightforwardly, and without comic contrast in his uniquely mixed idiom – his blend of Homeric heroism, Miltonic grandeur, and local quaintness – but also that he understood the early eighteenth-century expectation that happiness, far from being a transcendent good, would emerge in a very direct way from clusters of specific favorable events. Like John Scafe in the early nineteenth century, John Philips celebrates the eruption of happiness from a few choice events. As opera composers such as Henry Purcell or George Friedrich Handel crowned their operas with vast concluding choruses in which felicity spreads through the land owing to victory in some or other battle or return of a hero or simple turn of good fortune, so Philips, in his poem *Blenheim*, studies the eruptive nature of happiness (or its opposite, unhappiness) by presenting the Battle of Blenheim as the one-stop shop for causes of elevated (or depressed) moods.

In *Blenheim* (see Philips s.d.),[2] one of Philips's signature short, micro-epics (with fewer than 500 lines), some form of the word 'happy' (or 'unhappy') occurs five times, in each of these cases setting the theme for the verse paragraph that follows it. Happiness thus plays an unusually prominent role in a poem putatively concerning a grave topic such as military leadership. Indeed, Philips allows the theme to distract him from his quest for epic gravity. Words from the lexicon of eighteenth-century moods and passions are uncommon among object-oriented ancients.[3] Even the

2 Subsequent quotations are cited by line number.

3 *Blenheim* is the least memorable and least cited of John Philips's handful of otherwise consistently famous and enduring, if sometimes trivial, compositions. As Dustin Griffin notes, its confusing effect, if not its failure, results from its emphatically literary character: its tendency to congregate in too small a space too many conflicting allusions and too many references to

surprisingly empirical John Milton, Philips's English role model, seldom mentions the passions or any other abstractions from the emotions. Three occurrences of the root-word 'happy' pertain to *un*happiness not so much as a mental state but rather as a function of a reversal of fortune or of a sudden injection into an undesirable situation. In the first of these (l. 321), Philips develops an elaborate, inside-out analogy or typological comparison in which the promise of succession felicitates the son of the Prussian king, who, by comparison, enjoys a better fate than that which ancient Evander gave to his son, Pallas, who perished in battle. The second instance, referencing an «unhappy prince» (l. 351), alludes to the post-Blenheim ejection of the defeated Bavarian potentate; and the third occurrence, referencing an «unhappy nation» (l. 451), alludes to a dispute over the Polish throne. In these instances, unhappiness emerges through a process comparable to the rhetorical device of synecdoche. One event occurs or one situation arises and, lo and behold, the whole of the nation falls into unhappiness. Whatever happiness might be, determining whether a nation is happy or unhappy involves formidable gap-spanning: making conceptual leaps in which the imagination quickly moves from a single incident to the mental state of a nation of millions. The remaining occurrences of 'happy' are likewise matters of enumeration. «Thrice happy Albion» (l. 375) expresses triplicate happiness over the «happy days» (l. 472) that have been restored by Queen Anne. As in so many other militarily inspired poems, the restoration of happiness is the central theme and main conception of *Blenheim*. Nevertheless, *Blenheim*, which belonged to a veritable legion of verse ovations written for the Duke of Marlborough, showcases one bloody scene after another. Even the aforementioned peaceful reign of a virtuous queen appears in a strangely brutal rendition:

> Auspicious Queen, since in thy realms secure
> Of peace, thou reign'st, and victory attends
> Thy distant ensigns, with compassion view
> Europe embroil'd; still thou (for thou alone
> Sufficient art) the jarring kingdoms' ire,
> Reciprocally ruinous; say who
> Shall wield th' Hesperian, who the Polish sword,
> By thy decree; the trembling lands shall hear
> Thy voice, obedient, lest thy scourge should bruise
> Their stubborn necks, and Churchill in his wrath
> Make them remember Bleinheim with regret (ll. 451-461).

past idioms and styles. It is thus possible but not laudable for Philips to mix the eighteenth-century vocabulary of passions and other mental states with the more austere lexicon of Homer, Virgil, and Milton (Griffin 1984, pp. 449-450; also Cope 1992).

That is hardly the kind of happiness that we encounter in a pastoral poem or in a verse description of a noble estate or virtuous realm. Philips's poem has remained in memory longer than those of his rivals precisely because of his astounding aptitude at drawing out happiness from *any* set of incidents, whether pleasing or repelling. Philips's remarkable talent, in poems such as *The Splendid Shilling* and *Cyder*, for extracting impressions of both heroism and comedy from the same set of experiences is part of an overall strategy of *conversion*, whether of the ridiculous to the grand, the comic to the epic, or the horrific to the happy.

2

The lesson to take away from Philips's tonally bewildering poem is that, in the ferociously as well as philosophically empiricist world of early eighteenth-century thought and poetry, happiness involved action. A thing, an experience, or a person could be happy in the old sense of being pleasing or handy, but happiness in the more extensive, more modern sense sprang up from either a panoply of happy things or from the interaction of persons, things, and events in an emergently happy way. A puckish philosopher such as Bernard Mandeville, for example, can speak of the 'national happiness' (Mandeville 1720) in the way that today we talk about the gross national product: as if we could, from an Olympian perspective, see prosperity emerging from the actions of the millions.

Not only this elevated perspective, but also the notion that happiness is a kind of energetic parcel – that happiness is a large-scale process that flows freely from the interplay of diverse phenomena – could characterize eighteenth-century conceptions of verse as readily as it could characterize the ethical philosophy of happiness enthusiasts such as the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, or the political science of prophets of economic happiness such as Adam Smith or Thomas Jefferson. Alexander Pope all but militarizes happiness, deploying occasional references to happiness as if invocations of felicity were warheads. The highly kinetic Pope, who has an even greater talent than John Philips when it comes to drawing action out of inertia,[4] uses happiness in a deflective way, to impart a charge to or to increase the emotional momentum of related phenomena.

Pope's *Essay on Criticism* probably qualifies as his happiest work insofar as it delivers affirmative precepts for the production of pleasing art rather than satirically condemning deviations from the ideal. Happiness plays a role in Pope's famous analysis of the *je ne sais quoi* that shimmers atop great verse:

4 Think of his astounding ability to build an epic poem around 'Dulness', or of his renderings of all the hubbub surrounding the stupefying landscape revisions of Capability Brown and his employers.

Some beauties yet, no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles art, in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
And which a master-hand alone can reach (ll. 141-144; Butt 1963, pp. 148-149).

The formulation «happiness as well as care» turns on the motile character of happiness, which, through the 'as well as' phraseology, seems to push itself away from and to rise above the other diligences that a poet can exert. The passage as a whole gives the impression that this undefinable happiness is setting the pace for as well as outrunning the other virtues, that it is pushing away from particular happy excerpts on its way to becoming something more profound and more general. So it is that Pope lauds ancient authors who were «born in happier days» (l. 189, p. 150), whose felicity as writers pushes into the present even while they and their happier days push farther back in time and even as Pope's happy but intimidating idea of talent repels anyone other than those few writers who can conjure up visions of futuristic worlds where, despite their modernity, the residuum of the classical tradition animates artistic production.

In Pope's intensely polarized world, the introduction of 'happy' or any of its forms into a poem signals the imminent butting of a fool. Thus, in the *Essay on Criticism*, we find a 'happy' author who wishes to enlarge a stage so that the preposterous introduction of «Knights, squires, and steeds» (l. 282, p. 152) onto the crowded scene would not lead to a violation of the Aristotelian unity of place; we learn that otherwise lousy lines can qualify as 'happy' when they spill from the pen of a noble lord surrounded by sycophants (ll. 414-423, p. 156); and we discover that mediocre, unhappy wit can trigger envy but not atone for it (ll. 494-495, p. 159). Happiness is so volatile a chemical in Pope's poetical laboratory that its sheer presence triggers an explosive reaction driving happiness out of the field of vision and into some unattainable world. Thus the 'happy few' who belonged to the cadre of Greek and Roman critics (ll. 643-644, p. 164) observe Aristotle sailing away into a remote world of poets who will neither live up to his expectations nor reap praise for implementing an aesthetic manifesto, the realization of which remains permanently beyond their talents.

3

Pope's rendering of happiness as an emergent but also deflective attribute of especially good artistic or social productions, although not altogether optimistic, marked the emergence of a productive restlessness in English verse. In Pope's satire-charged universe, the appearance of any laudable

performance, be it in art or science, immediately leads to polarization. The new talent and his or her works diverge from the everyday productions of less happy scribblers, who in turn wax envious. More happily, Pope's productively restless discontent – his notion that one performance is never enough to generate multifaceted happiness and his conviction that happiness always runs away from its manifestations – encourages the tradition of roving description that gave us poets such as Thomson, Goldsmith, and Cowper, who, in describing vast swaths of experience, found problems and unhappiness everywhere that they looked.

One of the most happiness-soaked poems in the English language is surely the first (1730) version of James Thomson's *The Seasons*, where some variation of 'happy' or 'happiness' occurs forty-two times in a 5400-line composition. While that is admittedly less than a one percent incidence, Thomson's sprawling, post-Miltonic verse paragraphing limits the total number of discrete topics that even a long poem may contain. When any topic absorbs a minimum of fifty to one-hundred lines, only so many discussions will fit into even a long composition. These forty-odd glances at and discussions of happiness thus rise to a high level of prominence and visibility. Thomson's poetry describes a double retrograde motion that begins with an initial retrospective reference to the post-Miltonic, mock-heroic writings of John Philips, John Gay, and their many imitators but then quickly diverts from the comic habits of those burlesquing wits in order to glance back to Milton, there to recapture a secular, ideologically reduced version of the divine grandeur and the high seriousness of the great Puritan bard. For Thomson, poetry itself is about allusive process, about weaving between a variety of mentors, prototypes, and precedents that seem to contradict one another but that Thomson somehow reconciles in the verse equivalent of a very long retrospective view.

This 'long view' allows Thomson to correlate the contradictions in happiness and its poetry by recasting happiness itself as a shorthand term for descriptive processes. Happiness is salient in Thomson's verse because happiness, by oscillating between objects of attention and processes of evaluation, mimics verse, which oscillates between imitation and improvement. At any time and in any season, happiness is most easily discovered by those with a talent for scanning expansive landscapes and great scenes. Those who seek felicity should

With earnest eye anticipate those scenes
Of happiness and wonder, where the mind,
In endless growth and infinite ascent,
Rises from state to state, and world to world.
But, when with these the serious thought is foiled,
We, shifting for relief, would play the shapes
Of frolic fancy; and incessant form

> Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
> Of fleet ideas, never joined before,
> Whence lively wit excites to gay surprise,
> Or folly-painting humour, grave himself,
> Calls laughter forth, deep-shaking every nerve (*Winter*, ll. 605-616; Sambrook 1972, p. 145).

Happiness for cheerfully retired poets arises from the continuous dissociation of somewhat abstracted 'shapes' from parochial reality and the assembly of fanciful trains of ideas that run on vertical rather than horizon-hugging tracks.[5] In spring, for example, we fly all the way to the top of the universe, there to imagine «The joy of God to see a happy world» (*Spring*, l. 903, p. 27). That happy world, by Thomson's admission, derives its felicity partly from the abundance of prey available to god's hungry but not always merciful creatures. Thomson's emphasis falls less on the ease with which god overlooks the shortcomings in this best of all possible worlds than on god's active if only spectatorial effort to see happiness springing from the multiplicity of the creation.

The happy citizens of Thomson's world have a special knack for perceiving themselves as small components at the end of the long view of Thomson's cosmological landscape. A happily married rural couple, for example, abides in a small cottage that is seemingly at the end of a very long telescope. «The Seasons thus, / As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll, / Still find them happy» (*Spring*, ll. 1166-1168, p. 34): happiness arises when this rural couple experiences life at the steady focal point of a global, even astronomical drama, as the global tumbler of seasons, orbits, and related large-scale gyrations spins around them. The work of such happy pairs echoes across multiple social and geographical configurations that extend into an unending, unfurling series of far-away localities: «Heard from dale to dale, / Waking the breeze, resounds the blended voice / Of happy labour, love, and social glee» (*Summer*, ll. 368-370, p. 47). The individual voice here dissolves into a dispersed symphony of voices that, in the amalgam, create a perpetual, quasi-musical round of reiterating rustic settlements. Happiness for Thomson is a matter of geographical imagination and social process: of the ability to blend a highly artificial picture of one's place in the physical and the human environment, or at least to induce some cleverer person – a poet rather than a farmer – to undertake the assembly of that happy image. The eyes of the poet, after all, have a long focal length

5 For Thomson, landscape description is not only a matter of identifying and verbally transcribing static scenes, but rather of *continuously* following a landscape that not only is itself dynamic but that varies with the influence of the sun, moon, wind, seasons, and a thousand other factors. Vacillating human moods contribute to the dynamism of landscape description (Kinsley 2005, p. 6).

and peer through a flexible periscope, as is demonstrated by a remarkable image in which Thomson zooms in and focuses his vast analysis of happiness on a single child enjoying a single plaything: «Happiest of all the train [of humanity]! the raptured boy / Lashes the whirling top» (*Winter*, ll. 764-765, p. 149). That spinning top may be a fun toy, but Thomson magnifies its value by treating it as a turning point in the representation if not understanding of human happiness as a whole.

In Thomson, then, happiness is procedurally paradoxical. On one hand, it is experienced primarily in the long view, from a position so detached that very little is happening; on the other hand, that long view must not only be of something but must also show that particular occasion of happiness interacting with Thomson's panoramic presentation of the seasons. Retirement, the quiet and seclusion of a particular party who enjoys the luxury of leisurely and remotely viewing the world, leads Thomson's list of happy conditions:

> Oh! knew he but his happiness, of men
> The happiest he! who far from public rage
> Deep in the vale, with a choice few retired;
> Drinks the pure pleasures of the rural life (*Autumn*, ll. 1235-1238, p. 122)

Rural retirement falls far short of full seclusion and simple rest. It is defined rather more by the distance of its viewpoint and its provision of an assortment of non-intrusive 'pleasures' that allow for glancing engagement and for the counterpointing of social engagement with reposed philosophizing, «[f]or happiness and true philosophy/Are of the social still and smiling kind» (*Autumn*, ll. 1346-1347, p. 125). Happiness is a comparatively low-energy phenomenon. Too much action, too much engagement, undercuts the calm, reclining posture of the serene distant observer, yet action, if only a rural walk or an inquisitive scan of the horizon, is required in order to discover scenes of bliss, scenes in which strife is minimal and therefore demand for energy is low.

In the recipe for happiness, the mixing of activity with inactivity and of observation with engagement results in a keen interest in the animal kingdom. Although eighteenth-century authors almost universally believed that animals lacked reason and therefore experienced emotions imperfectly, it was that very deficiency that nominated them as perfect instances of Thomson's low-energy version of happiness. Thomson reports that his muse feels most cheerful «when she social sees / The whole mixed animal creation round / Alive and happy» (*Autumn*, ll. 381-382, p. 99): when the greatest number of unobtrusive scenes of easygoing animal action spread before the eye. From his outlook in England, far-seeing Thomson is able to view horrid avalanches tumbling down Alpine heights, yet can look through and past the havoc to perceive «the peaceful vales» where «happy Grisons dwell»

(*Winter*, l. 415, p. 139), detecting the low life amidst the high terrain and linking happiness to a kind of Alpine entropy. In another, more gruesome scene, Thomson unveils a fallen stag surrounded by «blood-happy» (*Autumn*, l. 456, p. 101) hounds who have concluded their hunt, hounds who, although allegedly standing still, remain active in the otherwise bizarrely quiet scene by reveling, rejoicing, and roaring at their victory, albeit in a stationary manner. A view of a laboring elephant in the equatorial tropics likewise passively suggests the possibility of an eventual happy scene. Perhaps, Thomson speculates, this elephant may eventually escape the tasks and the scenes that ambitious mankind imposes (*Summer*, ll. 716-732, p. 56). Even busy bees enjoy a quietly blissful unawareness that correlates with a distant view of happy hives, at least until more active beekeepers smoke them out of their hives (*Autumn*, ll. 1172-1183, p. 121).

Thomson's *The Seasons* sets the standard for verse conjurations of happiness during the last two-thirds of the eighteenth century. William Cowper's *The Task*, for example, features almost exactly the same level of saturation with regard to the topic of happiness and addresses all the same issues, from the happiness of distant seclusion to the panoptical happiness of the all-seeing creator, to the comparative happiness of competing animal species, and to the happiness of the British nation. Oliver Goldsmith's somewhat darker *The Deserted Village* takes a meta-analytical approach to happiness by considering happiness not as a thing in itself but rather as seen from disparate perspectives or considered under miscellaneous headings. Among Enlightenment writers, dreamers, spectators, and wits as much happiness is discovered in the act of categorizing happiness as is found in happiness itself.

4

'The act of categorizing happiness' points up the processional nature of happiness: its status as a property or consequence *of* other conditions or experiences. Of all the prepositions, 'of', which signals ownership, affiliation, or even aristocratic grandeur (e.g. Otto *von* Bismarck), is not only the most emotionally powerful of prepositions, pointing up as it does the fundamental connections among persons, places, or things, but also the most ontological insofar as it suggests the contents of things (e.g. 'a glass of wine', 'glass is made of silicon'). 'Of' is also a slightly bewildering preposition, for it suggests connecting both a bond and a diverging proceeding. Diamonds are made 'of' carbon but have changed with respect to the usual intuition of that murky material; a piece 'of' the puzzle latches into but is also severed from the big picture. 'Happiness', in eighteenth-century usage, often occurred alongside this provocative preposition, whether, say, as the 'happiness of liberty' or the perdurable 'pursuit of happiness'. The

eighteenth century hosted numerous 'of' poems pertaining to happiness, two of the most salient being Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* and Thomas Warton the Younger's *The Pleasures of Melancholy*. Although any occupant of an eighteenth-century sponging house or any beneficiary of an eighteenth-century mercury cure for socially transmitted diseases would surely question the linkage between immediate pleasure and long-term happiness, pleasure at least occasionally provides the groundwork of happiness.

Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* associates an assortment of pleasures with the transforming process by which ordinary experience becomes into imaginative poetry (see Aldridge 1944). 'Pleasures of imagination' are not exactly particular pleasures grounded in particular things or events, but rather pleasures keyed to the coalescing of these phenomena into an artistic composition. These pleasures 'of' imagination relate to the transfiguring of experience, which inevitably involves the distancing of the tangible sources of pleasure. It is not altogether surprising that happiness is a frequent topic within Akenside's wide-ranging poem, for happiness as a generalized condition involves a balanced, cumulative, and somewhat distanced response to happy events. Throughought his poem, Akenside represents even modest happiness in the context of immense frameworks, some of them of astronomical dimensions. Dr. Samuel Johnson may have searched for happiness across the vast expanse between China and Peru, but Akenside asks the «high-born soul» to undertake more than a world cruise in order to find the happy valley:

The high-born soul
Disdains to rest her heaven-aspiring wing
Beneath its native quarry. Tired of earth
And this diurnal scene, she springs aloft
Through fields of air; pursues the flying storm;
Rides on the vollied lightning through the heavens;
Or, yoked with whirlwinds and the northern blast,
Sweeps the long tract of day. Then high she soars
The blue profound, and hovering round the sun
Beholds him pouring the redundant stream
Of light; beholds his unrelenting sway
Bend the reluctant planets to absolve
The fated rounds of Time. Thence far effus'd
She darts her swiftness up the long career
Of devious comets; through its burning signs
Exulting measures the perennial wheel
Of Nature, and looks back on all the stars,
Whose blended light, as with a milky zone,
Invests the orient. Now amaz'd she views

The empyreal waste, where happy spirits hold,
Beyond this concave heaven, their calm abode
(book 1, ll. 183-203; Dyce 1835, p. 10).

A few lines later, Akenside estimates the distance to this happy zone as what we would now call six-thousand light-years, suggesting collaterally that distance and distancing are part and parcel of the kind of the high-flown happiness that this poet cultivates. More philosophically but no less metrically, we later learn that god has «adorn'd» «[t]he vast harmonious frame» with «happiness and virtue» (book 2, ll. 342-343, p. 33), and that happiness is a sort of colossal window-treatment draped over our the tiny but wide-angle lenses through which human beings behold the vastness of creation. The simple pleasures and artless happiness that we in post-Romantic culture prize is not for Akenside, who, again and again, stresses the effort required to monitor the emergence of overall happiness on a cosmological scale.[6] Even when he makes recourse to the familiar trope of the happy, simple, rustic life, Akenside hangs his advice on the immense scaffolding of his neo-Leibnizian vision of the best of all possible worlds. He tells average citizens to «[g]o then, once more, and happy be thy toil» (book 2, l. 481, p. 37), i.e. to go about life in the expectation of happily productive labors; but he situates that advice at the conclusion of an allegorical vision of divine design that harkens back to the English religious epic writer, John Milton. Toil yields happiness not owing to its inherent goodness or its healthful pleasure but rather by juxtaposition against the backdrop of god's intergalactic architecture. Akenside now and then does associate happiness with intermediate levels of abstraction. He uses the term 'happy' to characterize the general state of affairs on Albion's shores (book 2, l. 44, p. 24), where liberty and good social institutions reign. Fundamentally, however, happiness is 'of' something. It interacts with the assorted (and restless) powers, passions, and proclivities of the human mind. It harmonizes especially well with such daring drives as ambition and curiosity. The happiness of Nature's care for us is evidenced in the human preference for joys that begin in the adventurous discovery of the unknown:

Nature's happy cares
The obedient heart far otherwise incline.
Witness the sprightly joy when aught unknown
Strikes the quick sense, and wakes each active power
To brisker measures (book 1, ll. 230-234, p. 11).

6 Akenside took it as an article of poetic faith that poetry should proceed from and move beyond the beauties of the world: that is mimetic functions served to represent phenomena in a far vaster framework that the imagination could see more readily than the eye. See Fabel 1997, p. 47, and Norton 1970, p. 368.

Familiar joys are all well and good, but happiness is always moving on to greater reaches and out to vaster distances, eventually ending up almost as far as possible from its occasioning, happy causes. The best and most cheering perspective on happiness abides at an almost infinite focal length, in what amounts to the next, presumably as well as literally *super*natural world.

The association of happiness with escape from the slings and arrows hurtling through our secular world was a familiar theme even in the eighteenth century. The highly emotive and yet superficially philosophical enjoyment of the postponement of true joy to a post-mortem habitat enjoyed a certain cachet during the mid-eighteenth century, when Gothic novelists and 'graveyard' poets began experimenting with the pleasures conferred by the contemplation of the macabre. Another poem in the 'pleasures of' genre, Thomas Warton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, goes the extra mile that separates Akenside's contemplation of the happiness of the present configuration of the visible universe from the supernal happiness available in either the next life of in the contemplation of eternity from while living in the present. Warton, like Akenside, is fond of vast, bleak panoramas. He ascribes the greatest happiness not to the 'satrap' who lives riotously in Moscow or other entertainment capitals, but rather the exile who, bereft of his former life at court, can spend as much time as he pleases in contemplating the icy vastness:

> To me far happier seems the banish'd Lord
> Amid Siberia's unrejoycing wilds
> Who pines all lonesome, in the chambers hoar
> Of some high castle shut, whose windows dim
> In distant ken discover trackless plains,
> Where Winter ever drives his icy car;
> While still repeated objects of his view,
> The gloomy battlements, and ivi'd tow'rs
> That crown the solitary dome, arise (ll. 228-236; Warton 1747, pp. 18-19)

For Warton's fantastically but enthusiastically melancholy exile, 'as good as it gets' translates to 'as far as it gets'.[7] Happiness, or at least its perception, reaches its highest intensity in Ultima Thule. The farther from the site at which joy originates, the greater the capacity to see it in some vaster, more compelling framework, even if that framework abounds in misery. In the wormhole of Warton's gothic imagination, melancholy, the feeling farthest from felicity, warps around emotional space and reconnects with happiness:

7 Warton specializes in distant, exotic scenes, doubling the resulting effects by viewing them from even more remote venues such as ruined towers (Edgecombe 2004, p. 44).

Yet are these joys that Melancholy gives,
By Contemplation taught, her sister sage,
Than all her witless revels happier far (ll. 297-299, pp. 22-23).

Contemplation, the reflective process by which the happy occasion is drawn into the matrix of long-term happiness, is thus material to the construction of all that counts as happy'. Spontaneous happiness of the kind applauded by the Romantic writers and their successors fits at best awkwardly with the opinions of this purportedly 'pre-Romantic' writer, who applies the studied care and deliberation usually associated with neoclassicism to contrive a version of happiness that stretches beyond present time, into the future, possibly beyond the grave, and so far outside of colloquial notions of happiness that vernacular ideas of jollity are dismissed as 'witless'.

5

Thomas Warton's pejorative comments regarding the happy trifles that make simpletons smile suggest that, by the latter days of the long eighteenth century, the particular, detectable happiness that marked out a line of Alexander Pope's verse as a 'happy' bit of wit, or that characterized the good fortune of a Duke of Marlborough as the 'happiness' of military genius, had evaporated not only into a generalized mental state but into a somewhat airy artifact: into a visionary, sometimes even gothic continuum of moods, aspirations, and esoteric contemplations, which left vernacular good feelings far behind and drew its energy from the exploration of offbeat topics, whether the means of securing happiness for Frankenstein's monster or the joy of imagining empyrean kingdoms while witnessing a Montgolfier balloon ascent. Like his fellow would-be prophet, William Blake, Christopher Smart associates happiness with a compass bearing: «For there be twelve cardinal virtues […] / For there be three to the North – Meditation, Happiness, Strength» (*Jublitate Agno*; see Williamson, Belcher 1980, p. 65). For Smart, happiness is a pure if easily imagined motile process, a gravitation toward one of the points on the spiritual map. Thomas Jefferson's characterization of happiness as a 'pursuit' occurs within the context of this gradual disembodying of happiness during the Enlightenment, as does consideration of the extension of the state of happiness to other species, a possibility that is entertained in offbeat ways by entomologists such as Friedrich Christian Lesser or René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, and as does concern for the durability of happiness as evaluated by theorists of long-term and even geriatric health and happiness such as Richard Graves, John Armstrong, and Samuel Tissot. Understanding this commitment not only to a long but ever-lengthening view of an emotional state so central to and yet

also so elusive within human experience explains a variety of otherwise puzzling phenomena, whether the later eighteenth-century love of distant views and vast panoramas (or their smaller-scale follow-ons in the abstracted painting of J. M. W. Turner)[8] or the jotting of Wordsworthian and Coleridgean poems about spectacles beheld either at a literal or conceptual distance, whether glimpses of far-away bridges or quasi-telescopic encounters with leech-gatherers or glimpses of horizon-plying ships piloted by ancient mariners. Whatever happiness became by the end of the eighteenth century, it was required to be a long way away –which may be why distance-loving astronomers such as William Herschel expanded the size of telescopes nearly seven-hundred percent as the century drew to a close.[9] Perhaps happiness abided not at some point between China and Peru, but rather was moving to far-away Enceladus and beyond!

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8 Indeed, Turner read James Thomson's poetry (Tomlinson 1990).

9 During his long career as a telescope designer as well as astronomer, Herschel gradually increased the diameter of his mirrors (the primary light-collecting elements of a reflecting telescope) from six to forty-nine inches. See the Wikipedia article on the history of the telescope: `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_telescope`.

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«Nothing Better than Mirth and Hilarity»
Happiness, Unhappiness, Jest and Sociability in the Eighteenth Century

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Abstract It has been claimed that the eighteenth century invented happiness – or at least, began to entertain the notion that secular happiness could be expected as part of virtuous Christian life. Studies of the notion of happiness in this period have tended to focus on the philosophical dimensions of the concept. This essay offers a different perspective, by considering jest book culture and the idea of mirth through reading. It had long been argued that melancholy could be driven away by sociable jollity, and the eighteenth century sees the development of this literary tradition, in a glut of publications designed to 'purge melancholy' and drive away care. Yet, as this article will demonstrate, the idea of becoming happy through laughing together was a complex one, necessitating a balance between laughing with and laughing at others. We can also see the way in which jovial sociability complicated ideas of contentment through retirement.

It has been claimed that the eighteenth century invented happiness – or at least, began to entertain the notion that secular happiness could be expected as part of virtuous Christian life. In his history of philosophical ideas about happiness in Western Europe, Darrin McMahon describes a sixteenth and a seventeenth century in which it was widely assumed that happiness was really only found after death, and that to be a good Christian in this life was to embrace suffering. Texts such as *The Assurance of the Faithfull: or, The Glorious Estate of the Saints in Heaven, Described: and the Certainty of Their Future Happiness Manifested by Reason and Scripture* (1670) or *Heaven on Earth: Or A Serious Discourse Touching a Well-grounded Assurance of Mens Everlasting Happiness and Blessedness* (1654) stressed that true reward comes only in death (McMahon 2007, pp. 190-196). We can certainly see this perspective continuing into eighteenth-century literature – Richardson's *Clarissa* being a prominent example of the reward in happiness of the afterlife. But McMahon argues that in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century we also see the emergence of a different viewpoint – the belief that earthly happiness might be a sign of grace; the idea that to delight in the world, to live happily, was to live as God intended. The world bore the imprint of its maker, and to delight in

that world, was to delight in God (pp. 199-200). Pope's lines from the *Essay on Man* could only have been written in an era which embraced contentment as evidence of divine grace and salvation:

Oh Happiness, our being's end and aim!
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! whate'er thy name:
That something still which prompts th' eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die
[…]
Say, in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow?
(Epistle IV, ll. 1-4, 8; Mack 1950, p. 128)

This newfound commitment to the idea of being happy in life in turn generated much questioning and discussion. It prompted philosophers and moralists to ask whether everyone had a right to happiness. How might they best achieve it? McMahon argues that «no previous age wrote so much on the subject or so often» (McMahon 2007, pp. 200-201). He notes that in considering the nature of earthly happiness, commentators often blurred the distinction between the pursuit of happiness, and the state of actually feeling happy. And in confusing the two, they complicated the answers to a number of fundamental questions, such as how to account for the continued existence of misery, or whether feeling good was the same as being good; whether happiness was a reward for simply living, or for living well (pp. 201-202). Being happy turned out to be much more complicated than it initially seemed.

In literary terms, the new perspective on earthly happiness manifested itself in frequent evocation of the *beatus vir* or happy man, who lived in secular and moral contentment (see Røstvig 1958 for a full study of this tradition in English verse). Pastoral visions derived from Horace and Virgil were loosely blended with Epicurean and Stoic themes to create new images of the modern *beatus vir* – the happy man in rural retirement. The early eighteenth-century rector John Pomfret evoked the key notes of this model in his hugely popular and much anthologized poem *The Choice*, first published in 1700. *The Choice* is loosely modelled on Horace's *Satire* II, i, and Pomfret follows Horace in advocating the virtues of frugality, honesty and moderation. The secret of happy life, according to *The Choice,* was the balanced enjoyment of rural leisure, reading books and drinking a little fine wine with a couple of well-chosen male friends, on a well kept estate «not little, nor too Great». Samuel Johnson remarked of *The Choice* that «[p]erhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused» and declared that the poem «exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures» (Lonsdale 2006, vol. 2, p. 60). As the eighteenth century progressed, the notion of virtuous

happiness became a goal for enlightenment philosophers. «The Importance of any Truth is nothing else than its Moment, or Efficacy to make Men happy», wrote Francis Hutcheson (1725, p. 7). The poet and critic James Arbuckle observed that «Happiness, and the Search after it be the Business and Study of all Mankind, and nothing is of greater Importance to us in Life, than to be rightly inform'd wherein it consists» (Arbuckle 1734, vol. 1, p. 37).

McMahon's history of happiness is a compelling narrative – and one that provokes many questions. What was the relationship between theorizing about the societal importance of happiness, and actually being straightforwardly happy? It is also important to recognize that the visions of retired ease described by so many eighteenth-century writers often served polemical or political ends – the embrace of country contentment was frequently a way of critiquing the political status quo, as, for example, by dispossessed Royalist poets such as Vaughan and Cowley, or Pope opposing Walpole from his grotto at Twickenham. A vision of contentment outside of power was politically enabling, but was it really happiness? Was there room for straightforward mirth and jollity within these philosophically-driven versions of the happy man?

In this essay I will argue that although the study of happiness in the eighteenth century has tended to focus on the Enlightenment articulation of contentment in the works of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson or Hume, there are other literary sources that offer a different perspective. Alongside the emergent discourse of Christian happiness as contentment and benevolence, we also see a culture of mirth, of jestbooks and pamphlets designed to create well-being in alternative ways, and in particular, to drive away melancholy through communal joviality. Titles from to *The Merry Medley for Gay Gallants* (1755) to *Fisher's Cheerful Companion to Promote Laughter* (1800) represent a very different kind of literature, whose perceived value can be traced back to medieval physiology. Ideas about contentment were inextricably linked to theories about unhappiness, to the longstanding exploration of the causes and cures of melancholy, and humoral theory. The literature of mirth is generally predicated on the belief that unhappiness, in the form of melancholy, could only really be cured by a forceful injection of its opposite – hilarity or joviality. Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there is a sizeable literature dedicated to the curative properties of sociable mirth, or as the great seventeenth-century theorist of melancholy, Robert Burton, puts it: «Nothing better than mirth and merry company in this malady [melancholy]. It begins with sorrow (saith *Montanus*) it must be expelled with hilarity» (Burton 1651, p. 305).

If we turn our attention to this popular tradition, and to the connections between contentment and unhappiness, we gain a different perspective on the relationship between reading and being happy. This was not happiness-

as-contentment – this was well-being created and maintained through communal joviality, often raucous merrymaking. Belly laughter and practical jokes, riddles, comic songs and tall tales. And by focusing on this tradition, we can start to discern some interesting connections between happiness and literature, aspects not evident by exclusive reading of the philosophical and poetic evocations of the polite happy man. We can see the way in which a literature of laughter moves across class and gender boundaries. It is situated between oral and printed culture, constantly evoking the social exchanges that it mimics, and in turn, as jokes and jests and comic poems are copied into commonplace books and letters, it moves back into oral circulation. We also see some of the tensions implicit in ideas about how to be happy. There was a fine line between idealized contentment through retired leisure, and the melancholy induced by idleness and solitude; a tension between the well being induced by jests and jokes, and the sense of alienation that this could also engender.

1 Happiness and Melancholy

Melancholy, defined by the eighteenth century physician Richard Blackmore as «continual Thoughtfulness upon the same Set of Objects always returning to the Mind, accompanied with the Passions of Sadness, Dejection, and Fear», was regarded in medieval physiology as stemming from a large amount of cold and dry black bile in the body (Blackmore 1725, p. 164). Only if the amount became disproportionately large in comparison to the others did it become a disease (Verberckmoes 1999, p. 60). According to the humoral doctrine, antidotal cures helped redress the balance of the four bodily liquids (pp. 60-61). In the case of too much black bile, a change in lifestyle guaranteed some success in chasing melancholy.[1] Blackmore recommended treatment through vomitory medicines, laxatives and other purges, alongside «riding on Horseback, new Company, Change of Place, and Variety of Objects» (Blackmore 1725, p. 174). Exercise and joyfulness were key to many cures, and could be promoted through communal eating, walks in the open air, travel, hunting parties, ball games, music, and jokes. Laughter was healing laughter, thought to make the heart swell and produce fresh blood (Verberckmoes 1999, pp. 62-63). It was considered especially good to relax after a meal: «The reading of joyful histories and pleasant conversation» lifted the spirits after dinner, according to a popular Dutch health booklet (p. 65). The recommendation of curative laughter became commonplace over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was

1 Medical opinion in the eighteenth century continued to assert the role of the blood: Richard Blackmore explained that the disorder stemmed from «the want of rich and generous Qualities in the Blood» (Blackmore 1725, p. 155).

an integral part of Robert Burton's systematic analysis of the causes and cures of melancholy in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, a text whose concluding advice is «be not solitary, be not idle». Burton advocates various kinds of exercises of mind and body for the dispelling of melancholy, which range from hunting and fishing to writing acrostics and dancing. Jokes, jests and merriment were part of this recreational picture:

> The ordinary recreations which we have in Winter, and in most solitary times busie our minds with, are *Cardes*, *Tables* and *Dice*, *Shovelboard*, *Chesse-play*, The Philosopher's game, small trunks, shuttle-cock, balliards, musick, masks, singing, dancing, ulegames, frolicks, jests, riddles, catches, purposes, questions and commands, merry tales of errant Knights, Queens, Lovers, Lords, Ladies, Giants, Dwarves, Theeves, Cheaters, Witches, Fayries, Goblins, Friers, etc., [..] which some delight to hear, some to tell; all are well pleased with (Burton 1651, p. 270).

To those who consider such light-hearted entertainment demeaning, he continued: «now and then (saith Plutarch) the most vertuous, honest, and gravest men will use feasts, jests, and toys, as we do sauce our meats» (p. 303). Burton sums up his advice on this matter:

> what shall I say then, but to every melancholy man
> […]
> Feast often, and use friends not still so sad,
> Whose jests and merriments may make thee glad.
> Use honest and chaste sports, scenical shews, playes, games (p. 305).

Burton was writing in the mid seventeenth century, but the notion that mirth and joviality could have a curative function is still evident in later thinking. The eighteenth-century physician Timothy Rogers recognised a spectrum of melancholy, and for the less severe forms suggests that «[Melancholy] which is not deeply rooted […] can be drowned in wine, or chased away with sociable divertisements» (Rogers 1749, p. 276). The poet Anne Finch drives away melancholy with mirth and music:

> At last, my old inveterate foe,
> No opposition shalt thou know.
> Since I by struggling, can obtain
> Nothing, but increase of pain,
> I will att last, no more do soe,
> Tho' I confesse, I have apply'd
> Sweet mirth, and musick, and have try'd
> A thousand other arts beside,
> To drive thee from my darken'd breast (Reynolds 1903, p. 15).

Much of the popular jest book and miscellany literature of the eighteenth century was promoted as a cure for melancholy. Compilations drew together miscellaneous extracts in different comic genres, and typically included jests (short anecdotes involving some piquant reversal, incongruity or smart reply), riddles, word games and music. A typical title page lists the various kinds of entertainments on offer within: the subtitle of *Laugh and be Fat: Or the Merry Jester* offered «diverting jests, funny jokes, frolicsom stories, humourous sayings, entertaining tales, lively bonmots, pleasant adventures, keen repartees, merry waggeries, excellent puns, curious bulls, English, Irish, and Scotch, smart quibbles, agreeable humbugs, witty gibs, and other flashes of merriment. To which are added, the following humourous and agreeable articles, viz. new, merry, and ingenuous conundrums, rebuffes, riddles, epigrams, epitaphs, poems, acrosticks and other witticisms. Together with an entire new selection of toasts, sentiments, hobnobs. &c. at this time used in the best companies in London and Westminster. Calculated for both sexes, to kill care, to banish sorrow, and promote mirth, fun, jolity, and good humour» (*Laugh and Be Fat* 1797, title page). The conceit of a text which offered 'pills to purge melancholy' recurs again and again, most famously in *Thomas D'Urfey's Wit and Mirth: Or Pills to Purge Melancholy*, a large collection of songs published between 1698-1720.[2] Other compilations made more elaborate claims for both their contents, and their curative potential. The *Complete London Jester* promised to «expel Care, drown Grief, banish the Spleen, improve the Wit, create Mirth, entertain Company, and give the Reader a light Heart, and a chearful Countenance» (*The Complete London Jester* 1764, title page). *The Laughers Delight* claimed to offer «an Hour's Laugh at any Time, and design'd on Purpose to make the Heart Merry, and to prevent and expell Spleen and Melancholly, and drive the Evenings away with Mirth and Jollity. Usefull to all especially to those who take Physic» (*The Laughers Delight* 1765, title page). It is clear from the evidence of these collections that there was a whole range of material, from short comic anecdotes, to epigrams, acrosticks, riddles and songs, toasts – all materials based on social circulation – which was designed to drive away unhappiness, and promote good humour. Interestingly, the words happiness and happy rarely feature on these title pages. A typical example of this fare can be found in *Fun for the Parlour*:

> Not all that can be sung or said,
> Will aught avail without my Aid (Answer: Hearing).

2 Itself a possible reworking of a 1599 pamphlet *A Pil to Purge Melancholie*, which promised «health, with increase of mirth».

Why is a Musick-Book like a Prison?
Because it contains many Bars.

Why is a Corkscrew like good News?
Because it relieves the oppressed Spirits
(*Fun for the Parlour* 1771, pp. 81, 78).

The experience of positive well being is instead conjured through other synonyms – chearfulness, mirth, jollity.

Whether readers – or editors – actually believed that the contents could cure melancholy, or depression is hard to tell. But there is clear evidence of the social circulation of this kind of material amongst eighteenth-century readers, and an understanding of the pleasures it could bring. Riddle and jest collections were frequently prefaced with frontispieces depicting groups of men in taverns, supping punch, pipes out and chairs pushed back in jovial enjoyment of the comic world offered by the book in question.[3] If one is tempted to see the world of riddles and jokes as one largely rooted in popular culture, there is plenty of evidence, across England and Europe, of the enjoyment and collection of jokes amongst the elite (Bremmer; Roodenberg 1997, p. 5). At an average price of one shilling bound, jestbooks were far from the cheapest publications on the market – chapbooks typically sold for 1/2d to 1d. The price, the format and the terms on which such collections were described ('bon mots', 'smart repartees') all suggest that they were predominantly aimed at a middle and upper class readership. Historians of humour often note the changing social profile of joke tellers. After the Middle Ages, the collecting and telling of jokes spreads over the social spectrum, and it is clear that the telling of jokes even became part and parcel of the art of conversation among gentlemen (Brewer 1997, pp. 91-92). Derek Brewer has described the keen collecting of jokes and jest books by the great book collectors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (pp. 98-105; see also Birrell 1991, pp. 113-131). So, for example, Jonathan Swift's letters to his friend Thomas Sheridan have sometimes been seen by critics as an anomaly in his otherwise sophisticated literary repertoire. Yet in writing letters composed entirely of puns on the word 'ling', or in cod Latin, Swift was no more than a man of his time, enjoying the kind of verbal play that was the subject of hundreds of jest books and commonplace books.

3 On the use of such frontispieces in miscellanies, see Williams 2014, pp. 99-100.

2 Polite Laughter

One of the intriguing aspects of jestbook literature is the perspective it offers on the acceptable boundary between the polite and impolite. We might tend to assume that this distinction was gendered, that men drank punch and sang rude songs, and women sat and demurely sewed whilst they listened to a sentimental novel being read aloud. But these assumptions mask a more complicated story. Collections were marketed at a range of social groups – from *The Jovial Songster or Sailor's Delight* (1784) to *Fun for the Parlour: Or, All Merry Above Stairs* (1771), its frontispiece a group of well-dressed women sitting demurely around a table listening to a companion's reading from the book. The contents of *Fun for the Parlour* are not bawdy, but certainly not prim: there are jests about drunkenness, sexual reputation, shrewish wives, and unhappy marriages:

> A Gentleman in the Country having the Misfortune to have his Wife hang herself on an Apple-Tree, a Neighbour of his came to him, and begged he would give him a Cyon of that Tree, that he might graft it upon one in his own Orchard; «For who knows», said he, «but it may bear the same Fruit» (*Fun for the Parlour* 1771, p. 13).

Elsewhere we find compilations which directly address the question of audience and appropriateness in their prefatory material. So, for example, a collection called *Sir John Fielding's Jests* (1781) is subtitled *New Fun for the Parlour and Kitchen*. This suggests that it has an appeal both above and below stairs, with and without company. What is also significant is that the collection is presented as being more or less decent: «Stale Jests, insipid Poems, and gross Indecencies, we have carefully avoided» (*Sir John Fielding's Jests* 1781, p. iii). So what was 'decent'? Within the first fifty pages we have comic tales about sex, defecation, prostitution, infidelity and smelly feet. It is certainly tamer than other collections of the period but not really polite fare (see Thomas 2010). Looking at riddle and jest book collections, we can see that *double entendres* seem to have been a key part of witty amusement in the eighteenth century. Readers and listeners delighted in riddles and conundrums, and performed dialogues, all often based on playing with rude and polite meanings of words and phrases. Diaries and letters show us that women enjoyed bawdy riddles, and that comic dialogues were performed by both men and women. A Kew housewife Elizabeth Tyrell, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century describes enjoying an evening of comic performances and riddles:

> George went to Tea to Mrs Fishers to hear a young Lady play and sing – Mrs Henshaw brought her books of Riddles and Charades &c which

> amused us the whole Evening – George came home soon after eleven well pleased with his visit (Tyrell 1769-1835, 26 March 1809).

Yet there is also evidence of young men being shocked by female enjoyment of bawdy jokes. Dudley Ryder, a young lawyer writing in the early eighteenth century, is sometimes thrown by the things he hears. He writes in May 1716:

> «The worst of Mr. Powell's conversation is that he is apt now and then to make use of double entendres, which shocked me very much and I wonder Mrs Marshall seems so well pleased with them and so little shocked at them.' On a subsequent occasion, later that year, he notes that 'we passed away the evening in comical conversation enough. It chiefly turned upon bawdy and double entendres, than which I perceived nothing is more touching to Mrs. Marshall. I don't know that I ever talked so much to any woman in that way as I did at that time» (Matthews 1939, p. 332).

3 Laughter, Cruelty and Unhappiness

Such evidence of the enjoyment of – but also anxiety about – this kind of wit and innuendo complicates our expectations of what appropriate entertainment might consist of, for men and women. Dudley Ryder's unease at Mrs Marshall's bawdy jokes suggests that, for him, the world of jokey mirth is not a straightforward conduit to happiness. Although he is not the butt of the joke, her comic licence seems to exclude him. This question of inclusion and exclusion is central to the happiness of jest culture. One of the characteristics of jest books is that they offer many anecdotes based on stock types and situations – the cuckolded husband, the Welshman, the blind woman, the congenital idiot. These types by implication affirm a norm, a group of readers who are able to laugh, united, at the traits and misfortunes of those outside their group. Within *The Merry Medley* we find the following comic stories:

> A Man that had but one Eye, met early in the Morning, one that had a crooked Back, and said to him, «Friend, you are loaded betimes». «It is early, indeed, (replied the other), for you have but one of your Windows open» (*The Merry Medley* 1758, p. 19).
>
> *Epitaph on a talkative old Maid.*
>
> Beneath this silent Stone is laid,
> A noisy antiquated old Maid,

Who, from her Cradle, talk'd till Death,
And ne'er before was out of Breath;
Whither she's gone we cannot tell,
For if she talks not, she's in Hell;
If she's in Heav'n, she's there unblest,
Because she hates a Place of Rest (p. 26).

In an article on jest books and male youth culture, Tim Reinke-Williams discusses the role of misogyny in jest books of the seventeenth century. He argues that this misogyny created a sense of shared values amongst elite young single men, whose jokes were at the expense of the older married men who represented patriarchal authority. He concludes that «attacking women with 'revilings, taunts, and iests' thus enabled young men to fashion their own gendered identities and undermine married patriarchs, ridiculing what they had not yet, and might never, become» (Reinke-Williams 2009, p. 335). But here again our expectations of inclusion and exclusion sit alongside other forms of evidence. *Fun for the Parlour*, a collection expressly designed for a polite and female audience, is full of jokes about men who resent their shrewish wives, who celebrate their widowerhood, or who are generally unhappy in marriage. While there are jests about drunkenness, there are far fewer jokes about bad husbands. In this case, women laugh with and at men who are unhappy with other women, and the dynamics of exclusion are harder to pin down. But the prevalence of jokes at the expense of an outsider forces us to consider the link between laughter and unhappiness from a different angle. Much jest book mirth, promoted as driving away sorrow, is in fact predicated on laughing at others' misfortunes. Jesting affirmed shared values and fostered social bonds amongst those enjoying the joke, but also promoted social, religious and gender antagonisms and xenophobia by excluding victims of the jest (see Krahl 1966; Wilson 1969; Brewer 1997). As Simon Dickie has shown, jest books were only one manifestation of a strain of ridicule and cruelty in eighteenth-century literature that is hard to square with the notions of benevolence and sensibility that were so influential at the time. Dickie argues that recent emphasis on the sensibilities of polite culture in the eighteenth century, the commitment to humanitarian benevolence that we find in the works of Hume or Fielding, occludes the delight in slapstick cruelty that we find in the hundreds of jestbooks published in the period. «Too often, it would seem, our conclusions about mid-century 'polite' culture derive not from the actual pleasures or reading habits of this class but from its own idealized image of itself – from the self-conscious 'project' of 'politeness'» (Dickie 2003, p. 5). Dickie's study of cruelty in eighteenth-century literature amply illustrates the canon of jokes about disability, sexual violence, deformity, and poverty that runs throughout the comic literature of the period. As he affirms,

these jests were read and enjoyed by men and women, and at prices ranging from 1 shilling to 3 shillings, they were affordable only to those with considerable disposable income. Thus happiness and unhappiness were linked together in more complex ways – pleasure and well being could be generated by jests and jokes, yet those jokes were often predicated on forms of social exclusion and stigmatization which contemporaries believed could induce melancholy. In this context, it is not surprising that Robert Burton's approach to jests is twofold: they are both conducive to happiness, and also, in the form of «Scoffs and Calumnies», dangerous to the individuals who are mocked.[4] Although as we have seen, mirth and jokes were seen as part of the cure for melancholy, Burton's fullest discussion of jests is in this section, in which he observes that «although they peradventure that so scoffe, do it alone in mirth and merriment [...] an excellent thing to enjoy another mans madness; yet they must know that it is a mortal sin» (Burton 1651, p. 150). He concludes his discussion on this theme with the following advice:

> Set not thy foot to make the blinde to fall,
> Nor wilfully offend thy weaker brother:
> Nor wound the dead with thy tongues bitter gall,
> Neither rejoice thou in the fall of other.
>
> If these rules could be kept, we should have much more ease and quietness then we have, lesse melancholy: whereas on the contrary, we study to misuse each other, how to sting and gaul, like two fighting bores, bending all our force and wit, friends, fortunes, to crucifie one anothers souls; by means of which, there is little content and charity, much virulency, hatred, malice, and disquietnesse among us (p. 151).

4 Shared Laughter

We can get some sense of the role that jests, jokes and riddles played in creating happiness in real social networks by looking at the evidence of individual readers. Warwickshire Record office holds a letter series from the 1730s, representing repeated exchanges between four well educated young women in their late teens: Catherine Collingwood, Mary Pendarves, her sister Anne Granvill, and Margaret Cavendish. Mary Pendarves would

4 As Mary Anne Lund has argued, this dual perspective is characteristic of Burton's approach to reading: «Tensions between therapeutic and dangerous reading are not continuously in evidence; occasional remarks about reading as potentially disquieting or unhealthy are not enough to destroy his presentation of reading as a healing activity, though they do present a challenge to it» (Lund 2010, p. 98).

become the blue stocking Mary Delany, Margaret Cavendish the Duchess of Portland, one of the greatest antiquaries and collectors of the century. Catherine Collingwood would become Lady Throckmorton of Throckmorton Hall, and Anne Granville another aristocratic hostess. At this stage in their lives, they were preoccupied with town gossip and social exchanges. Reading through the letters, it is soon clear that their epistles follow a formula: the addressee is praised, and then berated for not writing sooner. Mutual acquaintances are discussed. The final section of the letter discusses reading and usually offers an exchange of some sort of riddle, lighthearted jokes which affirm the friendship group. The games they circulate are similar to the word-based wit prescribed by Robert Burton as a preventative, or cure for melancholy:

> If those other do not affect him [i.e. more serious studies], and his means be great, to imploy his purse and fill his head, he may go find the Philosophers stone; he may apply his mind I say to *Heraldry*, *Antiquity*, invent Impresses, Emblems; make *Epithalamiums*, *Epitaphs*, *Elegies*, *Epigrams*, *Palindroma Epigrammata*, *Anagrams*, *Chronograms*, *Acrosticks*, upon his friends names (Burton 1651, p. 285).

The jokes shared by the Pendarves/Cavendish/Collingwood circle are a form of wordy recreation, a social currency. They are recognized as an important source of happiness and pleasure in the domestic worlds inhabited by the group of women. Anne Granville writes to Catherine Collingwood on 27 August 1734:

> I'm grown fatter then when I had the pleasure of seeing you last, hope you increase in it also, my receipt is laughing, for we have with us a good humoured merry man that Miss Harcourt has persecuted with tricks, if you know of any do send me word, or any pretty ridles or rebus's.[5]

Other letters give an insight into the wider circulation of the jokes: Margaret Portland writes to Catherine Collingwood on 16 September 1733:

> I have likewise sent you a Dictionary of hard words which by the time I see you I shall expect that you will be able to Converse with a Certain Gentleman who I hear is going to be married to Miss Spencer. Don't put it in Fortunes Box for I must have it again adieu my dear Collyflower.[6]

5 Anne Vernon to Catherine Collingwood, 27 August 1734. In: *Letters written to Catherine Collingwood*, Warwickshire County Record Office, Throckmorton papers, Tribune, CR 1998/CD/Folder 49.

6 Margaret Portland to Catherine Collingwood, 16 September, 1733, WRO, Throckmorton Papers, Tribune, CR 1998/CD/Folder 49.

Portland writes a year later, on 16 September 1734:

> the Ode I sent you I thought extremely silly but when I see you I will show you the Verses I told you of which are very pretty & you may Copy 'em if you please, they are not by the Club but by the Poetical Footman. I found out your Riddle & have Dazzled a good many People with it, I have sent you one in return that you may send to the Wit.[7]

Portland's letters are often partly in code, her gossip about mutual friends represented as flowers, in which everyone is named: there is a nettle, a rose and a sweet William. A letter of 20 October 1734 ends:

> I have had a Letter from the Wit who is very angry you don't write to her she sent me a Rebus which I desire you will send me the explanation of very soon.
>
> If measure of Lace thats Less than a nail
> & Where travellers hope to meet with good ale
> The Shepherds retreat when the sun is at height
> is the name of a Lady we love at first sight.[8]

The letter collection reveals an avidity in the receipt and solving of these puzzles, and suggests that they will pass into further social circulation. The jokes entertain twice, once in the initial reading, and then again when deployed amongst other circles or friends or guests. The importance of such apparently slight pleasures should be seen in the context of the relative idleness and isolation of women such as these. Sarah Jordan, Diane Buie and others have emphasized contemporary concerns about the effects of female idleness and boredom in this period, related in part to the increasing leisure time of middling sort and gentry women during this period (Jordan 2003, pp. 84-122; Buie 2010, pp. 86-97). Buie states that «the link between women's idleness and the mental distress it caused becomes immediately apparent when we begin to read the letters, journals, poetry and prose written by eighteenth-century women» (Buie 2010, p. 97). She cites Johnson's *Idler* No. 80 essay, in which, writing of fashionable women who long for town life, he observes that:

> They who have already enjoyed the crouds and noise of the great city, know that their desire to return it is little more than the restlessness of

7 Margaret Portland to Catherine Collingwood, 16 September 1734, WRO, Throckmorton Papers, Tribune, CR 1998/CD/Folder 49.

8 Margaret Portland to Catherine Collingwood, 20 October 1734, WRO, Throckmorton Papers, Tribune, CR 1998/CD/Folder 49.

> a vacant mind, that they are not so much led by hope as driven by disgust, and wish rather to leave the country than to see the town (Bullitt, Bate, Powell 1969, p. 250).

We get an inkling of the boredom of rural retreat in the letters. Anne Granville writes from Oxfordshire to Catherine Collingwood on 24 May 1734: «I hope London is more agreable than Cockthrop, for tis here as cold as xmas, and as wet, so I have nothing to doe but work and read my Eyes out».[9] In a later letter, again sent from a country house, she complains:

> Do not be so Cruel as to Imagine I don't feel very sensibly the leaving my agreable Friends in London, but I brag of the pleasures of my Solitude more to show my Philosophy than any great Joy they give me, for nothing alone can be very delightful; you Contribute to my entertainment many Ways.

Yet she also makes claims for the benefits of rural seclusion:

> I had rather you injoy'd some rural retreat, and much rather it were in our neighbourhood, for all country pleasures give me so much pleasure that I pity all my Freinds who do not tast them or have no Opportunitys to learn, for I am persuayded it is like other inclinations, improved by seeing the reasonableness of it.[10]

Granville's letters, in particular, show an attitude towards country living which veers between bored disdain and philosophical encomium. The jokes and games she shares with her friends simulate a circle of wits – on paper – as a way of livening up her rural existence. Her dual response to her condition is suggestive of a wider ambivalence about the value of rural retirement, and its supposed pleasures. In much seventeenth and eighteenth century writing on melancholy, there was a perceived connection between idleness and melancholy – that too long left alone, without any sort of employment, was conducive to sadness and self absorption. The diaries of the depressive Nottinghamshire spinster Gertrude Savile are full of references to the melancholy state brought about by her under employment and solitary existence (cfr. Savile 1997). An idle, solitary lifestyle was considered detrimental in two ways: it had a depressing effect on one's mental health, and it was thought not to be the life God had intended for mankind. «It is

9 Anna Granville to Margaret Portland, 24 May 1734, WRO, Throckmorton Papers, Tribune, CR 1998/CD/Folder 49.

10 Anna Granville to Margaret Portland, 17 June 1736, 1 August 1737, WRO, Throckmorton Papers, Tribune, CR 1998/CD/Folder 49.

[…] by no Means allowable to sequester ourselves from Society», Peter Du Moulin states, «because God has formed us for one another. They who do so, unless it is for the public Good, are but an useless Burden upon Earth» (Du Moulin 1769, p. 90). Here we find one of the paradoxes at the centre of eighteenth-century notions of happiness – on one hand, the much praised ideal of the *beatus vir* was predicated on a life of relative seclusion – retirement from public life, a rural retreat, with modest sociability. Pomfret's *The Choice* for example, does not specify very much actual activity beyond leisure – drinking, reading, talking to friends occasionally. And an endless cycle of busy sociability was seen to be enervating, and ultimately depressing: George Cheyne writes that «Assemblies, Musick, Meetings, Plays, Cards, and Dice, are the only Amusements, or perhaps Business follow'd by such Persons as live in the Manner mention'd, and are most subject to such Complaints, on which all their Thoughts and Attention, nay, their Zeal and Spirits, are spent» (Cheyne 1733, p. 52). But was the flipside of the idea of happiness in retired solitude actually a disengaged idleness, which in itself could lead to sadness and melancholy? Perhaps contentment and unhappiness were two sides of the same coin. In a robustly argued article from 1952, R. D. Havens wrote of the contradictions at the heart of neoclassical visions of solitude. He argued that what we find in the eighteenth century is a twin preoccupation with man's essential gregariousness, paradoxically coupled with, as McMahon, Røstvig and others have noted, a massive literature of rural retirement. Havens argues that the praise of rural seclusion found in so much eighteenth-century literature was no real embrace of the contentments of solitude but rather, «a never never land of idealized nature. […] the neoclassicists made clear that they regarded solitude, except as they disliked it, as an avenue of escape from reality, an excuse for day-dreaming» (Havens 1954, pp. 266, 269). It may be that the eighteenth century was a time for writing, endlessly, about the joys of rural seclusion – but not actually for feeling them.

5 Borrowed Fun

For the circle of young women described above, the circulation of games and jests was one form of entertainment, which enabled them to feel connected to their friends, and to a wider network of sociable exchange. They write about the exchange of these items as a source of pleasure, an alleviation of otherwise potentially unhappy isolation. Jokes are constantly related back to their social origins – to a particular wit or friend. Derek Brewer has argued that the recorded form of the joke decontextualizes the jest, depriving it of much of its emotional power by stripping it of its social group and communal jollity (Brewer 1997, p. 91). But in this and other letter series, we get a glimpse of the way the transcribed jest is used

to recreate the social group. The pleasures of jokes and games are not only about laughter, but also about the simulacrum of town wit that they afford. In this sense a manuscript exchange resembles the printed jest books of the era. Individual stories relating to particular figures become detached from their original author and circulate as part of a wider collection of witticisms. But in circulation, they continued to evoke the witty world which generated them. Most of the stories in jest books are based in towns, usually in London. Many were advertised by association with the haunts of town wits, and with their urbanity. There is much topical metropolitan humour in accounts of celebrated 'frolicks' and 'humbugs'; jokes about the London stage and high politics; about famous courtiers or men of fashion. This emphasis on the origin of the quip can be traced back to the first jest book proper, which is normally reckoned to be the *Facetiae*, the collection of jests written by Poggio Bracciolini, the great humanist scholar. His collection of scabrous, sometimes ancient, anecdotes was said to have arisen from the gossip of papal secretaries in Rome. Poggio Bracciolini claimed that the jests were written by named persons about others – witty, malicious gossip – but they had received literary polish. The jokes were written in Latin in 1450, circulated widely in Europe, and were printed in 1477. They were immensely popular, and others writers adopted individual items, and similar books began to be published in Europe.

Both manuscript and printed jests, riddles and jokes were a genre of recycling and updating – the scores of jest books published across the eighteenth century reworked and reused much of the same material, in slightly different formats and orders. Yet what is interesting about this phenomenon is that many of the jokes also retained a certain biographical specificity. As we have seen, a lot of stories centred around stock types: the shrewish wife, the Irishman, the cuckold. But other comic narratives were based on real life celebrity jokesters, Sir John Fielding, Baron Munchausen, The Earl of Rochester, Charles II or Beau Nash. *Joe Miller's Jests*, perhaps the most frequently reprinted collection of the era, purported to contain the witty jests of Joe Miller, the early eighteenth century actor. Returning to *Sir John Fielding's Jests,* which is subtitled *New Fun for the Parlour and Kitchen*, we glean from the title that its content has, supposedly, migrated from the public, and largely male, environments of the alehouse: the reader is told that the jokes and stories within are «carefully transcribed from original manuscript remarks, and notes made on such occasions, and at the Shakespeare, Bedford Arms, and Rose Taverns [...] where the above celebrated Genius and his Jovial Companions (the drollest Wits of the Present Age) usually met to Kill Care and promote the Practice of Mirth and Good Humour» (*Sir John Fielding's Jests* 1781, title page). It is an interesting concept, that readers can use a collection such as this one to recreate a sort of celebrity jokester's evening entertainment within their

own homes. The reality was that the content of this particular collection was material recycled from innumerable other jest books of the period, and highly unlikely to have come from manuscript jottings of the *bon mots* of John Fielding (Dickie, 2003, p.7). But it is premised on the idea that it is pleasurable to have joviality by proxy, a kind of borrowed fun. This is also the case in some of the longer narrative collections. One publication, *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of his Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia* is described as «recommended to Country Gentlemen; and, if they please, to be repeated as their own, after a hunt, at horse races, in watering place, and other such polite assemblies; round the bottle and fire-side» (Raspe 1786, title page). The fictional collection of stories within, assembled by the German writer Rudolph Erich Raspe, was inspired by the historical figure of Hieronymus Karl Friedrich von Münchhausen, a German nobleman who had gained a reputation as an imaginative after-dinner storyteller, creating witty and highly exaggerated accounts of his adventures in Russia. Over the ensuing thirty years, his storytelling abilities gained such renown that he frequently received visits from travelling nobles wanting to hear his stories. Raspe took the reputation of the real von Munchhausen, and created a fictional character upon whom a whole assemblage of implausible anecdotes could be hung.[11] So what began as a real life collection of tall tales, was fictionalized as a vehicle for assorted travel anecdotes, which could then in turn be appropriated by their readers for rendition to be repeated as their own. We can start to glimpse here some of the ways in which jovial literature circulated throughout literary culture in this period – often attached to an individual through their reputation, stemming from a range of print and oral sources, and deployed orally in social situations. The literature of joviality thus sits on the boundary between print and oral forms, authored and anonymous works. W. Carew Hazlitt observed astutely in 1890:

> we are not apt to ask ourselves the question, who delivered the joke, or ushered it into print? There are cases, of course, where the author of a sally or rejoinder, himself repeats it to a third party, possibly in its original shape, possibly with embellishments; but there must be, nay, there are numberless instances in which a funny thing is given to a person, not because he said it, but because he might or would have done so (Carew Hazlitt 1890, p. 17).

The Munchausen compilation also illuminates the way in which being jovial was a skill to be acquired. One of the big differences between the jestbook literature of the seventeenth and that of the eighteenth century was the

11 The 1780s and 90s saw the publication of over 20 editions and reworkings of the Munchausen collection, many of them subtitled *Gulliver revived*.

shift towards the instructional nature of compilations. Simon Dickie claims that «many jestbooks were produced – in this age when dullness was the worst of social vices – as 'how-to' manuals for those wanting to shine in company» (Dickie 2003, p. 9). It is true that *The Art of Jesting* was the subtitle of many eighteenth-century texts, and prefaces introduced the contents of collections with basic instructions on how to delight assembled company. Rather than seeing eighteenth-century jestbooks merely as a continuation of a traditional genre of popular entertainment, we might also see them as part of a broader culture of eighteenth century of self improvement. Like the elocutionary manuals which taught aspiring middle class readers to read with assurance before their friends, jest books offered handholding for those keen to become the jovial and entertaining sociable man or woman at the centre of the group.[12] *Fun for the Parlour* was said to be «calculated to render Conversation agreeable, and to pass long Evenings with Wit and Merriment» (*Fun for the Parlour* 1771, title page). The intangible art of 'good conversation' was, of course, a cornerstone of eighteenth century polite sociability, and collections such as this one can be understood in part as a manifestation of this project. The «Preface to the Reader» in *Companion for Gay Gallants* begins with the declaration that «There is one Kind of Conversation which every one aims at, and every one almost fails in; it is that of Story-telling. I know not any Thing which engages our Attention with more Delight when a Person has a sufficient Stock of Talents necessary for it» (*Merry Medley* 1758, sig. a2). The editor goes on to distinguish between the five types of storytellers: the short, the long, the marvellous, the insipid and the delightful, with educative examples of each style. In the new landscape of self consciously acquired sociability, elements which might appear to us to be the basics of informal exchange – how to tell a good story, how to joke – were codified and taught in collections such as these. Baron Munchausen's tall tales are «recommended to Country Gentlemen; and, if they please, to be repeated as their own, after a hunt, at horse races, in watering place, and other such polite assemblies; round the bottle and fire-side» (Raspe 1786, title page). Presumably no longstanding member of the rural gentry needed to be told the basics of male sociability – but a newly gentrified tradesman might. Other collections offered similar advice – all of which attempted to reconcile the spontaneous and fluid nature of joking and merriment with formal advice.

This article began with a distinction between happiness in the form of enlightenment ideas about human contentment, and a simpler idea of well-being through sociable mirth, a long standing cure for unhappiness. But

12 Some collections were prefaced with advertisements for other instructional works: *Sir John Fielding's Jests*, for example, included a puff for *The New Universal Story-Teller*, which consisted of «a greater Variety of valuable Matter calculated for the Pleasure and Improvement of Readers of every Class» (*The Universal Story-Teller* 1785, title page).

as my discussion of the print culture of joviality suggests, the mirthful happiness of jests and jokes was not as straightforward as it seemed. Looking more closely at how people read and used the literature of jest reveals the faultlines between theories of happiness, and the lived reality. We can see the way in which jokes and games were sometimes seen as an embodiment of friendship groups, and were thus especially valuable for those living in relative isolation – often the same kind of rural seclusion that was elsewhere praised as a model of contented moderation. It also shows us the way sociable humour promoted inclusive ideas of general human well being, but that it was also frequently predicated on the exclusion of certain groups. Jestbook literature speaks to a blend of lived experience and printed representation, practical and theoretical fun – it offers a different way of looking at a literature of how to be happy. It was based on the idea that other people's joviality is infectious and curative. But printed jokes and games are of course, not the same as the company of real people, and in some ways, jestbook mirth is a culture of fun by proxy. If the eighteenth century was truly the age in which secular happiness was invented, it was also an age which discovered some of the limitations of a literature of happiness.

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Happiness and Ideological Reconfiguration in the Revolutionary Novels of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays (1788-1799)

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Abstract In the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, the attack on patriarchy paradoxically does not leave much room for happiness, as it is combined with an inscription of femininity within the paradigm of sensibility. Sensibility, though reviled by Wollstonecraft in some of her works, functions as a plot matrix, which neutralizes the rational arguments of the female protagonist (in fiction) or the pamphleteer (in polemical essays). Furthermore, Wollstonecraft and Hays are more concerned with justice than with the search for happiness.

The Enlightenment was much concerned with happiness, already a major theme of ancient philosophy, which had established a connection between happiness and virtue. Although in the eighteenth century that connection was not broken, being in particular theorized by Shaftesbury at the beginning of the period,[1] the end or aim of human life was also seen from a different angle, with man's rights coming to the fore as an essential component, especially in the second half of the century.

Some English women writers, while they embraced Enlightenment ideas, and specifically the concern with human dignity and rights, also brought into the debate the question of the specific rights of *women*, as against those of human beings in general, outlining in what happiness might consist for them. This article studies the four revolutionary novels of two writers, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) and Mary Hays (1760-1843), who were friends and moved in the same Radical circles. Some of their works were published by Joseph Johnson, who entertained them and other authors, such as Thomas Holcroft, Thomas Paine, and William Godwin. Indeed, Godwin was a close friend of Hays, and it is she who reintroduced him to Wollstonecraft in January 1796. Hays saw herself as a disciple of Wollstonecraft. Both writers

1 In *The Victim of Prejudice*, Mr Raymond says to his adopted daughter: «The first and most earnest of my cares and precepts has been, by forming you to virtue, to secure your *happiness*»(Ty 1994, p. 28. See also what Mr Francis declares in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*: «The growth of reason is slow, but not the less sure; the increase of knowledge must necessarily prepare the way for the increase of virtue and happiness» (Ty 1996, p. 48).

wrote essays on the condition of woman; Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* came first, in 1792, and provided part of the impetus for Hays's own *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (1793) and *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798).

Their novels were written over what might be called the revolutionary decade, 1788 to 1799, this latter year seeing the fall of the French Directory and the beginning of the Consulate, with the continuing rise of Napoléon Bonaparte. They are Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), then Wollstonecraft's unfinished *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria. A Fragment*, published by William Godwin in 1798 after her death in childbirth, and finally Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799).[2] While the essays criticize the upbringing and education of women and argue that more professional avocations should be open to them, the novels (which touch on those matters too) dramatize in detail the fraught and lop-sided relations between men one the one hand and, on the other, women of character who will not meekly fit the model of womanhood encapsulated in the conduct books aimed at young females. These novels show the complex interaction of many different factors bearing on females once they reach marriageable age: those factors include the traditional conception of female subjection (as against the new ideology of rights and progress), male predatoriness (which clashed with the strong injunction for chastity and propriety in women), hostility to unconventionality and assertiveness in females. In other words, these novels dramatize various subject positions, which turn out to be unbearable and destructive in the current state of society. That happiness is a goal is made explicit: Emma Courtney, for instance, writes to her mentor Mr Francis that «*happiness* is, surely, the only desirable *end* of existence!» (Ty 1996, p. 85); and again later, she reflects: «Individual happiness constitutes the general good: *happiness* is the only true *end* of existence» (p. 116). However, the protagonists of these novels, which are revolutionary in several respects, never achieve happiness.

I will discuss the way in which happiness is defined dialectically in relation to such key concepts and values as nature, reason, virtue, the passions and sensibility. I will also examine the parallel between the tensions generated by the rejection of simple binary oppositions (such as reason and the passions, for instance; Jones 1994, and Ty 1994, discuss this opposition) and change in the genre of the novel, which in our corpus becomes a mutant form where fiction and truthful autobiographical material are indistinguishable. I will not be primarily concerned with characterizing the demand for social change in the corpus, but with the intellectual and

2 In parenthetical references, *Mary, A Fiction* will be abridged as *M*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* as *EC*, *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria* as *WW*, and *The Victim of Prejudice* as *VP*.

ideological implications of that demand. As the concepts listed above are intricately connected with each other, and as the novels under study tend to question their separateness, my own discussion will involve some overlap.

The four novels by Wollstonecraft and Hays have never been analysed together, but I will use the insights of Mary Jacobus on *Emma Courtney* and Vivien Jones on that novel and *The Wrongs of Woman*, as well as my own article that discusses sensibility and repetition in Hays's fiction (Jacobus 1999, Jones 1994, Bour 1998). Gary Kelly, in his two monographs (Kelly 1976 and 1993), has particularly focused on the political content of those novels, seen as advocating a middle-class cultural revolution: his reading provides a background for the analysis which follows.

I will start with brief liminal remarks on a computer search of the number of occurrences of the words 'happiness' and 'happy' and their antonyms in Hays's and Wollstonecraft's novels as well as in their *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Those words occur much more often in the essays, partly no doubt because they are longer works but also, I would suggest, because they are very much concerned with redefining happiness for females and emphasizing that it should be factored into the workings of society. The high frequency of those words in the novels is, in a way, more surprizing, as their protagonists are more often *un*happy than happy; this can probably be put down to the high theoretical content of novels that are all more or less didactic and demonstrative. The words 'unhappiness' and, especially, 'unhappy' are more frequent in Hays's fiction, whose protagonits express their emotions more emphatically than Wollstonecraft's.[3]

From what and whom did Wollstonecraft and Hays derive their ideas of happiness? First, from their own reading of fiction, where the dominant aesthetics and ethics had been for several decades those of sensibility, the corresponding generic model being the romance. But they set out to challenge that model rather than endorse it, as it was based on the centuries-old *doxa* about woman's intellectual inferiority and a construction of female nature as dominated by the passions; however, as will be seen, they could not break away completely from their conception of the female mind seen as partly structured and ennobled by sensibility. Further, both Wollstonecraft and Hays were well-read in the philosophy of their own day; both embraced Locke's epistemology, complemented, in Hays's case in particularly, by William Godwin's emphasis on the role of circumstances both past and present as a determinant of action, which role was sometimes seen in necessitarian

3 In Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), there are 36 occurrences of 'happiness', 12 of 'happy', one of 'unhappiness', and 5 of 'unhappy'. The word count in the same order for the other works is: *Appeal*: 29, 15, 0, 2; *Mary*: 6, 9, 0, 4; *The Wrongs of Woman*: 8, 9, 0, 2; *The Victim of Prejudice*: 9, 10, 0, 5; *Emma Courtney*: 29, 16, 0, 10.

terms.[4] Empiricist philosophy, in which knowledge is grounded in the senses, states that human beings naturally seek pleasure and try to avoid pain. Pleasure thus becomes a component of happiness. Emma Courtney, in the eponymous novel, writes to Augustus Harley: «What is it we desire – *pleasure* – *happiness*? I allow, pleasure is the supreme good; but it may be analysed – it must have a stable foundation» (Ty 1996, p. 124). Hays frequently mentions Helvétius, whose materialism and sensationalism she endorses, with some inconsistency, as she occasionally (for instance at the very end of *Emma Courtney*) voices Godwin's belief in the overarching power of reason to prevail over prejudice and misguided passion.[5] She is also close to David Hume, when Emma Courtney says: «my reason was but an auxiliary to my passion» (p. 61). As for Wollstonecraft, Adam Smith's notion of sympathy, as expounded in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), made a deep impression on her: there are many references to that work in the 1792 *Vindication* and sympathy governs the behaviour of many characters in her fiction. Both women might also have been aware of Jeremy Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789). All those theoretical references provide a backbone for the representation of the behaviour of women in their interaction with men and the negotiating of social life, but they also generate tensions and contradictions, as will be seen.

Let us first look at the relationship between happiness and sensibility. *Mary. A Fiction* stands apart, as it is – at least ostensibly – imbued with a deeply Christian conception of life and rules out happiness on earth. This is clearly stated on at least two occasions: «happiness only flourished in paradise – we cannot taste and live» (Todd, Butler 1989a, p. 22); and again a little later: "She [Mary] forgot that happiness was not to be found on earth, and built a terrestrial paradise liable to be destroyed by the first serious thought» (p. 42). Indeed, trying to grasp the nature of happiness is preposterous, as Mary writes at one point:

> There are some subjects that are so enveloped in clouds, as you dissipate one, another overspreads it. Of this kind are our reasonings concerning

4 In the first chapter of *The Victim of Prejudice*, the autodiegetic narrator notes: «the graces, with which nature had so liberally endowed me, proved a material link in the chain of events, that led to the subsequent incidents of my life» (Ty 1994, p. 6); a little later on, she says she is «[e]ntangled in a series of unavoidable circumstances» (p. 41). In *Emma Courtney* the protagonist asks her mentor Mr Francis: «To what purpose did you read my confessions, but to trace in them a character formed, like every other human character, by the result of unavoidable impressions, and the chain of necessary events» (Ty 1996, p. 147).

5 Emma tells her husband Mr Montague: «I feel for you all the affection that a reasonable and virtuous mind ought to feel – that affection which is compatible with the fulfilling of other duties. We are guilty of vice and selfishness when we yield ourselves up to unbounded desires, and suffer our hearts to be wholly absorbed by one object, however meritorious that object may be» (Ty 1996, p. 170).

> happiness, till we are obliged to cry out with the Apostle [Paul], *That it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive in what it could consist*, or how satiety could be prevented (p. 60).

The pleasures on earth are delight (pp. 57, 65), rapture (pp. 26, 57), sympathy, the pleasures of sensibility, «the luxury of wretchedness» (p. 65; also p. 40). Now, it is very striking that what is ruled out in *Mary* is happy married life, marriage itself being rare in this novel: Mary's mother was a frivolous young woman who married fashionably – and married a fool; Henry's beloved betrayed him and died; Mary obeys her parents in marrying Charles, who sets off for the continent on the same day (p. 20), pointedly before the marriage has been consummated. Later, Mary and Henry fall in love, but their relationship remains a Platonic one. After Henry's death and Charles's return, she sees her husband, but without any physical intimacy developing; indeed, «when her husband would take her hand or mention any thing like love, she would instantly feel a sickness, a faintness at her heart, and wish, involuntarily, that the earth would open and swallow her» (p. 72). The very last sentence of the novel is: «She thought she was hastening to that world *where there is neither marrying*, nor giving in marriage» (p. 73). The reference to the Gospel of Matthew (22: 30) neatly concatenates the themes of happiness, marriage and sexuality. Of course, as has been pointed out by earlier scholars, Wollstonecraft intended to criticize the loveless, ill-assorted marriages, which were widespread in the eighteenth century, and to this extent *Mary* adumbrates Wollstonecraft's feminist critique of established social institutions (for the homoerotic overtones of this rejection of marriage see Johnson 1995). However, what seems to me more striking is that the strong heterosexual bond, which lies at the heart of this novel, is exclusive of sexual consummation, and that (true) sensibility and sensuality are exclusive of each other. This suggests that, while the depth of Wollstonecraft's religious faith is not in question, Heaven here is to some extent a signifier that serves the purpose of stating that happiness is out of reach on earth – because it cannot be embodied. In Heaven, existence *will* be purely spiritual and happy, Wollstonecraft seems to say, while on earth, it *cannot but* be 'disembodied' and unhappy: true interaction can be emotional, aesthetic and intellectual, but not sexual.

Social criticism in this novel remains implicit, and the social role Wollstonecraft carves out for women is still rooted in sensibility, a sensibility which is carefully characterized in two passages (pp. 46 and 59-60), the latter being described as a «rhapsody on sensibility» and providing a comprehensive definition of all aspects of sensibility – physiological, moral, aesthetic. At one point in the rhapsody, Mary states: «these raptures are unknown to the depraved sensualist, who is only moved by what strikes his gross senses» (pp. 59-60).

By excluding sensuality from the purview of sensibility, Wollstonecraft was in line with the conception of femininity conveyed by the major conduct books, which claimed that women had no sexual feelings. This contrasts sharply with what she says in the *Author's Preface* to *The Wrongs of Woman* about «[t]he sentiments I have embodied» (p. 83). In this novel, which she wrote after her affair with Gilbert Imlay and while sharing William Godwin's life, she explicitly rejects this conception of women as feeling no sexual desire and she broadens the definition of true sensibility to include sensuality:

> When novelists or moralists praise as a virtue, a woman's coldness of constitution, and want of passion; and make her yield to the ardour of her lover out of sheer compassion, or to promote a frigid plan of future comfort, I am disgusted. They may be good women, in the ordinary acceptation of the praise, and do no harm; but they appear to me not to have those 'finely fashioned nerves', which render the senses exquisite (p. 144).

This redefinition of sensibility involves a change in the configuring of mental faculties and in the conception of reason. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (in particular, in Chapter II), Wollstonecraft again and again stresses the need to develop woman's understanding and points out that when that has truly been allowed to happen, it will be possible to ascertain whether men's reason is indeed more developed than that of women. There, she still sees reason and the passions as distinct. Six years later, in *Wrongs of Woman*, the distinction disappears, but not because woman's supposedly overdeveloped sensibility has taken over her weak understanding. The narrator says of Maria:

> Such was the sensibility which often mantled over it [her brow], that she frequently appeared, like a large proportion of her sex, only born to feel; and the activity of her well-proportioned, and even almost voluptuous figure, inspired the idea of strength of mind, rather than of body (Todd, Butler 1989b, p. 104).

The body/mind divide disappears as the opposition between the passions and reason does. It is no longer just fallen women who are 'sexed'; voluptuousness and intelligence can be combined. The same applies to the fiction of Mary Hays, as has been pointed out by Eleanor Ty (Ty 1996, pp. 19-20). When Emma Courtney says: «[a]re not passions and powers synonimous [*sic*] – or can the latter be produced without the lively interest that constitutes the former?» (p. 147), Hays is paraphrasing Helvétius, who believed that «the passions animate the moral world» (Ty 1996, p. 19).

Mary Hays goes further in this rejection of an exclusionary dichotomy

between body and mind, by indicting chastity in both her novels. The very blunt Emma Courtney writes to Augustus Harley, the man she pursues:

> From the miserable consequences of wretched moral distinctions, from chastity having been considered as a sexual virtue, all these calamities have flown. […] Half the sex, then, are the wretched, degraded, victims of brutal instinct; the remainder, if they sink not into mere frivolity and insipidity, are sublimed into a sort of – (what shall I call them) – refined, romantic, factitious, unfortunate, beings (p. 144).

The *Victim of Prejudice* emphatically points out the injustice of ostracizing and reducing to vice or destitution women who have been raped, as if they had allowed strong sexual feelings to get the better of them and discard established morality. Both the novel's main protagonist, Mary Raymond, and her mother, also called Mary, undergo this fate, but the younger Mary loudly proclaims that her integrity is intact. *Wrongs of Woman* makes the same point about the character of Jemima, a daughter whose life repeated that of the mother: as servants, both of them were seduced and then quickly cast off by their masters. Hays, however, goes further in rejecting asceticism and in identifying pleasure as a component of a happy virtue: «Ascetic virtues are equally barbarous as vain: – the only just morals, are those which have a tendency to increase the bulk of enjoyment» (Ty 1996, p. 116).

Hays devotes more time than Wollstonecraft to the re-mapping of mental faculties and moral values, pitting the ideas of Helvétius against those of Mr Francis/William Godwin, and pointing out that the rationalism of the latter comes up against the legitimate needs of human beings' passional make-up. To Mr Francis, who argues that the only real evil is dependence, and who states definitively: «had you worshipped at the altar of reason but half as assiduously as you have sacrificed at the shrine of illusion, your present happiness would have been as enviable, as your present distress is worthy of compassion» (p. 139), who claims that Emma wilfully caused her own unhappiness, Emma retorts, in writing: «What does it signify whether, abstractedly considered, a misfortune be worthy of the names real and substantial, if the consequences produced are the same?» (p. 141). This very advocacy of the importance of feelings is at the heart of Maria Venables's defence at her trial in *The Wrongs of Woman*; the judge, whose concern is less the prevalence of reason than that of 'the good old rules of conduct', exclaims: «What virtuous woman thought of her feelings?» (Todd, Butler 1989b, p. 181). It does not mean that Hays and Wollstonecraft renounce reason: in her letter to her ward, Augustus Harley junior, which comes before the narrative of her doomed love for his father, Emma advises: «be not the slave of your passions, neither dream of eradicating them» (Ty 1996, p. 8); this echoes what Hays had said in her *Preface*, describing her protagonist as «a human being, loving virtue while enslaved by passion» (p. 4). But she

objects to characters in fiction exemplifying «a sort of *ideal perfection*, in which nature and passion are melted away» (pp. 3-4).

This affirmation of the essential unity of mental faculties and of the dialectical enmeshing of reason and the passions, echoes, with regard to the condition of women, the questioning of the supremacy of reason, which is seen here as an instrumental rather than a normative reason – that is to say, it is seen as a reason put in the service of existing hierarchies rather than of a new 'gender-sensitive' conception of human rights. As Judith Hawley puts it, Mary Hays «refuses such masculine enlightenment [as comes from Mr Francis], presumably because it would reinforce the existing power structure» (Hawley 1996, p. 27).

It should now be clear that the problematisation of sensibility and, more broadly, of the reason-passion dyad leads to a redefinition of virtue, which may diverge from conventional values or indeed from what is regarded as legally permissible or right. Hays's character Mary Raymond, who has been raped by Sir Peter Osborne and then persecuted by him, states firmly:

> My mind, unviolated, exults in its purity; my spirit, uncorrupted, experiences, in conscious rectitude, a sweet compensation for its unmerited sufferings. The noble mind, superior to accident, is serene amidst the wreck of fortune and of fame (Ty 1996, p. 156).

This conceptual work in turn leads to a scrutiny of the concept of nature. As was common at the time, the concept is highly polysemic, ranging from the natural environment to an ideal norm that everybody can find in his/her heart and mind to guide their aesthetic and moral choices, manifesting the potential for man's perfectibility. Nature as the natural environment plays an important part in *Mary* and in *The Victim of Prejudice*, whose female protagonists have enjoyed the moral benefits of an upbringing in the country. There is some latent primitivism here, but the country is not presented as an alternative to the corruption of cities: Hays and Wollstonecraft know that cities are where the main battles between men and women are enacted, and where they may be won – in law courts or when gainful employment makes their female protagonists fitfully independent. They also show that vice can pursue virtue in the country. The Nevilles, who welcome Mary in *The Victim of Prejudice* when her guardian Mr Raymond wants to remove her well away from the lewdness of Sir Peter Osborne, live a simple but happy life. Mary exclaims:

> *Happiness*, coy and fair fugitive, who shunnest the gaudy pageants of courts and cities, the crowded haunts of vanity, the restless cares of ambition, the insatiable pursuits of avarice, the revels of voluptuousness, and the riot of giddy mirth, who turneth alike from fastidious refinement and brutal ignorance, if, indeed, thou art not a phantom that mockest

> our research, thou art only to be found in the real solid pleasures of nature and social affection (Ty 1994, p. 46).

The very rhetoric of the passage – the use of allegory, of the obsolescent second person singular – as well as the hypothesis that happiness may be a 'phantom' undermine the idyllic depiction of the frugal happiness of the Nevilles, soon to be annihilated by a revengeful Sir Peter.

Nature as guiding principle governs the aesthetic judgements of Henry in *Mary*: «His taste was just, as it had a standard – Nature, which he observed with a critical eye» (Todd, Butler 1989a, p. 33). The reason-virtue-nature sequence appears repeatedly in Hays's fiction (see Ty 1994, pp. 35, 55, and 1996, p. 81), constituting a normative triad that underwrites emotions. The sequence suggests a reference to *jus naturale*, the law of nature that is the law of reason and directs one to virtuous behaviour. The extra element brought by Hays and Wollstonecraft is precisely the creation of a continuum between that conceptual triad and passion. In *The Victim of Prejudice*, Mary Raymond exclaims, when she understands that her illegitimate birth makes it impossible for her to marry William Pelham: «What tyranny is this? When reason, virtue, nature, sanctify its emotions, why should the heart be controlled?» (Ty 1994, p. 35) The traditional dualism of early-modern natural law, which distinguishes between the moral and the physical, is here rejected. Further, nature is clearly used as a way of criticizing established norms of social behaviour and institutions.

This shows how Hays and Wollstonecraft use key concepts of Enlightenment thought, trying to reshape them within the overarching framework of their feminist politics, with the added difficulty that they redefine sensibility: rejecting it when it is seen as a marker of inferiority and a means to perpetuate female subjection, upholding it when its sexual dimension becomes a sign of a whole human nature. The tensions and instability among those components are intellectually productive, although, on the level of the plot they often explain the protagonists' pain and the unhappy endings of the stories. The conceptual instability is an aspect of what Vivien Jones has called «the novels' refusal to compromise» (Jones 1994, p. 181).

The combination of concepts borrowed from natural law, empiricist philosophy, and Godwin's perfectibilist rationalism, but also from a sexualized conception of femininity underlain by recent developments in medicine (see Laqueur 1990), makes for a revolutionary representation of womanhood. The apologetic aims of Wollstonecraft's and Hays's fiction may explain why their depictions of men are extreme and somewhat schematic, as male characters become figments of fantasy, sometimes akin to the males of Gothic fiction. Henry in *Mary* is somewhat ectoplasmic, partly because of the consumption that is wearing him down, partly because he is a mirror image of Mary, whose sensibility excludes the embodiment of love. Augus-

tus Harley, in *Emma Courtney*, is known mostly through Emma's letters to him and through her projection onto him of her romantic desires; as a result of Augustus's mother's constant praise of her son, he became «the St Preux, the Emilius, of [her] sleeping and waking reveries» (Ty 1996, p. 59) even before she had met her. Augustus's answers to Emma's letters are few, often cryptic and cold, so they do not enable the reader to form an 'objective' idea of him. The same projection of an ideal image of masculinity applies to Darnford in *The Wrongs of Woman*; he is even seen at a further remove, as Maria first becomes acquainted with him through his annotations in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Heloisa* and then identifies him with Saint-Preux. George Venables, in Wollstonecraft's unfinished *Maria*, and Sir Peter Osborne, in *The Victim of Prejudice*, become villains worthy of Gothic fiction, expressions of libidinal disgust and repulsion more than fully accomplished (im)moral agents. The former is the vile husband who does not balk at offering his wife as payment for a much-needed loan; the latter the vile seducer who extends his hatred to his victim's friends. All these male figures are fantasies of one sort or another.

The projections of perfection and of literary archetypes onto the very imperfect men with whom Maria and Emma fall in love shows that only literary models are available and that a new model of masculinity cannot even be outlined: in *The Wrongs of Woman*, Darnford, the man of feeling, turns out to be as unreliable as George Venables, the traditional authoritarian and conceited husband. This excludes any plot focused on balanced relationships between male and female characters and ending in shared happiness.

The instability of the philosophical underpinnings of the novels under study, combined with the strong autobiographical dimension of the extreme affects of the female protagonists, explain why the structure of the sentimental novel explodes. Wollstonecraft's two novels were heavily autobiographical, as shown, emblematically, by the names of their protagonists. Mary's passionate friendship with Ann is based on Wollstonecraft's own romantic attachment to Fanny Blood, and the eponymous protagonist's parents are not unlike Wollstonecraft's own parents. In her second novel, Darnford is reminiscent of Gilbert Imlay, Wollstonecraft's first lover. In Hays's case, the autobiographical component is so strong that she used some of her letters to William Godwin and some of his answers, as well as, probably (probably only, as this correspondence is not extant), letters to and from William Frend, the man she pursued, perhaps from 1791 and, in any case, until 1796. The wording is sometimes altered, some passages are cut, but many are used *verbatim*. *Emma Courtney, The Victim of Prejudice* and *The Wrongs of Woman* are patchworks of different kinds of discursive material: omniscient narration (the basic mode of *The Wrongs of Woman*), first-person narration (used in the main narrative of *Emma Courtney* and *The Victim of Prejudice*), memoirs, letters, inset stories included in the main

narrative. Thus, the romance – whether epistolary, autodiegetic or endorsed by an extradiegetic narrator – dissolves into a series of related discursive units staging the unhappiness of women and stating their demands. Just as narrative is no longer continuous, the difference between fiction and autobiography disappears. I would say that this epistemological indistinction goes even further than what Tilottama Rajan has called «autonarration», a «specific form of self-writing, in which the author writes her life as a fictional narrative, and thus *consciously* raises the question of the relationship between experience and its narrativisation» (qtd in Ty 1996, p. xvii).

Mary Jacobus has argued that «Hays's letters to Godwin thus resemble the psychoanalytic encounter, in which the analyst's reticence and self-control make possible the analysand's self-disclosure and potential self-realisation» (Jacobus 1999, p. 212). The letters enabled Hays to understand, and free herself from, her largely phantasmatic passion, with Godwin challenging her and exacting her reflection in his uncompromisingly rationalist injunctions. The letter-writing and the letters created a sort of limbo from which Hays could emerge, having reconstructed the fiction of which she had been a prisoner. In the same way her character, Emma Courtney, voices her passion and her misery again and again, obsessively pestering Augustus Harley, who usually does not answer her correspondence, as has been noticed. Godwin had apparently advised Hays to turn her abortive affair into a novel (Ty 1996, p. 15). Though in 1796 few of Hays's readers would have known that Hays was writing about herself, reading her *Emma Courtney* and *Wrongs of Woman* would have placed them in a new narrative space', beyond linear romance and within a narrative hall of mirrors, where characters belonging to successive generations undergo the same experiences or where one character is repeatedly faced with the same occurrences – usually persecution by a man, though Emma Courtney rather assumes a male position in constantly writing argumentative and peremptory letters to Augustus. The thematic repetition becomes an equivalent and a manifestation of the generic dead-end, of the inadequacy of the romance.

Towards the end of *Emma Courtney* the eponymous protagonist acknowledges that she has behaved irrationally, but explains that the wider social context left her no choice:

> If I wildly sought to oblige you to chuse happiness through a medium of my creation – yet, to have assured *yours*, was I not willing to risque all my own? I perceive my extravagance, my views were equally false and romantic – dare I to say – they were the ardent excesses of a generous mind? Yes! my wildest mistakes had in them a dignified mixture of virtue. While the institutions of society war against nature and happiness, the mind of energy, struggling to emancipate itself, will entangle itself in error (Ty 1996, pp. 158-159).

This exculpation, the primary relevance of which is on an intradiegetic level, can also be read on a meta-narrative level as a sort of vindication by Hays of the repetitive patchwork she wrote, suggesting that fiction could no longer be fiction and that a love story could no longer have a happy ending.

The romance, which has become thoroughly dystopian, exposing as it does the many ways in which women are exploited by men, and formally dysfunctional, voices the misery of the protagonists in the hyperbolic style that may be associated with revenge tragedy or Gothic fiction, and the stories can only end in disaster or in renunciation. In *Mary* and *The Victim of Prejudice*, the only way out of the failure of heterosexual relationships is death, both protagonists, though in very different predicaments, wanting to avoid sex as that is the only way of preserving their integrity – the Mary of Wollstonecraft's fiction before the consummation of her marriage, and the Mary of *The Victim of Prejudice* after being raped. In the other two novels, the way out of romantic illusion is motherhood. After Augustus Harley has died in Emma's arms, she brings up his son, who was born of his secret marriage. As for Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel, various endings were very briefly sketched, the most developed one seeing Jemima bringing her daughter to Maria, the child not having died as she had been told, and Maria deciding to live for the sake of her child. *Emma Courtney* combines this shift from heterosexual love to motherhood with an apocalyptic ending which, seen on a meta-fictional level, again rehearses the contradictions and ambiguities of the traditional romance: Mr Montague, whom Emma had married once she had lost all means of maintaining a modest financial independence, kills the infant born from an affair with a servant, then commits suicide. The genre of the romance ends in a bloodbath, as it were. In both *Emma Courtney* and *The Wrongs of Woman*, motherhood is the alternative to death, which looms at the end of *Mary* and *The Victim of Prejudice*.

Both protagonists of *Emma Courtney* and *The Wrongs of Woman* have written their life-story to pass it on to their child – her adopted son in the case of Emma; her only child, a daughter, in the case of Maria. The transmission of those narratives is meant to interrupt the unconscious desire to repeat past behaviour – Augustus Harley junior «wildly persecuted» a young woman just as Emma pursued Augustus Harley senior – and to make happiness possible for the next generation, as Emma states explicitly (Ty 1996, p. 7). At the beginning of her memoir, Maria Venables also says that she wants «to provide for» the «happiness» of her daughter (Todd, Butler, 1989b, p. 123) and writes her memoir for that very reason. As for the «victim of prejudice«, she addresses a wider audience, with a more militant aim: «*I have lived in vain!* unless the story of my sorrows should kindle in the heart of man, in behalf of my oppressed sex, the sacred claims of humanity and justice» (Ty 1994, p. 174).

In their essays Wollstonecraft and Hays try to outline the educational,

social and legal changes necessary for women to be able to be beneficiaries of the 'improvement' advocated by many Enlighteners. In their fiction, they focus mainly on the interaction between individual men and women – although in *The Wrongs of Woman* Wollstonecraft specifically indicts the legal status of women. Fiction thus becomes an effective way of showing the multiple ideological and emotional traps in which women are caught, and the intellectual and moral work that must be done at individual level and will be the dialectical complement to institutional reform. What makes Wollstonecraft's and Hays's novels powerful, apart from the unabashed explicitness and occasional 'extravagance' of their protagonists (Emma Courtney uses the word repeatedly about her own behaviour; see for instance Ty 1996, pp. 145, 169) is that the repetition of situations over several generations or among characters creates a formal frame for the repeated outraged protests of the protagonists, protests which foreground raw emotion, so much so that, as Vivien Jones says about Emma's letters to Augustus, the expression of those affects remains «painful» even today (p. 182). The repetition of certain social patterns, or situations, appears correlated to a tendency to psychological repetition.

Thus, happiness is gendered, psychologized and historicized in the fiction we have discussed, and found to be graspable only through redefinition of other values and through a depiction of unhappiness. The ideological reconfiguration is combined with the demembering of the sentimental romance. This is no mean achievement on the part of Wollstonecraft and Hays.

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